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Our daily homily



Our Daily Homily

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By Rev. F. B. Meyer

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F. B. MEYER, B.A.

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"Christian Living," etc., etc.

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“Voice of the Holy Spirit, making known
Man to himself, a witness swift and sure,
Warning, approving, true and wise and pure,
Counsel and guidance that misleadeth none!
By Thee the mystery of Life is read;
The picture writing of the world’s grey seers,
The myths and parables of the primal years,
Whose letter kills, by Thee interpreted
Take healthful meanings fitted to our needs,
And in the soul’s vernacular express
The common law of simple righteousness.
Hatred of cant and doubt of human creeds
May well be felt. The unpardonable sin
Is to deny the Word of God within.”

—J. G. WHITTIER.

OUR DAILY HOMILY

Whose leaf also doth not wither.

Psa. i. 3 (R. V.).

“IF a man abide not in Me,” said our Lord, “he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.” The same thought is here. Thrust down your rootlets to the oozy river bed, and there is no doubt about your continuing earnest, patient, God-filled. The sun of temptation may strike you with sword-like beams, but you will have a source of supply which they cannot exhaust. The secret of an unwithering beauty is in the Word of God, delighted in and meditated upon day and night. And what is the Word of God, but the life of God translated into human speech?

Wean yourself from all beside, and learn to feed on God. Withdraw your rootlets from men and things, and let them travel to the river of God, which is full of water. Close other doors, and open those that lead out on to the terrace, whence you may behold the far-spread landscape of what He is, and says, and is willing to be to us all.

Note that word *meditate*. The root must lie in contact with the stream, and the soul must steep itself in the Word of God. We must give the truth time to enter and pervade our souls. We must have retreats, shut away from the rush of life, up and down the glades of which we may tread. These retreats are oftener found within the soul than without. Just as in the temple of old, there was Solomon's porch, where Jesus walked, so in the temple within there are closes and cloisters, where we may commune with our heart, and be still.

This day have I begotten Thee.

Psa. ii. 7.

THE Holy Ghost tells us that this was addressed by the Father to the Son in His Resurrection (see Acts xiii. 33). It was from the grave that our Lord stepped up to His mediatorial throne, whence all the hatred of His foes has had no power to dislodge Him, and never shall have. Death is a birth into the true life. Jesus was the Firstborn from the dead; we too are to be born out of the darkness of the grave into the Life Immortal.

“There is a beyond, and he who has once caught a glimpse of it is like a man who has gazed at the sun. Wherever he looks, he sees everywhere the image of the sun. Speak to him of finite things, and he will tell you that the finite is impossible and meaningless without the infinite. Speak to him of death, and he will call it birth; speak to him of time, and he will call it the mere shadow of eternity.”

But is it not wonderful that He has *begotten us* also unto a living hope by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead to an incorruptible inheritance? We are the sons of the resurrection. In Jesus we are already on resurrection-ground. Our sun shall no more go down, nor our moon withdraw herself. For us, at least, God hath destroyed “the veil that is spread over all nations.”

Do not wonder, then, at the hate of men. They will rage, and imagine vain things; they will take counsel together. It cannot be otherwise.

Thou mayest expect, then, to be bruised by thy brethren, and hated by the world. But at such times Christ will come to thee, and give thee fresh accessions of His resurrection life, carrying thee into the hidden house of His abiding, and confirming the weak knees and the heart that faints.

But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. Psa. iii. 3.

OH, my soul, hast thou made God thy glory? Others boast in their wealth, beauty, position, achievements: dost thou find in God what they find in these? Thou needest safety from the shocks of time and change: is He thy shield? Thou must have something outside of thee, to complete thy blessedness: is He thine ideal? Thy head is drooping like a flower-cup—it sadly needs the dexterous hand of the Gardener: is it busy with thee?

Nothing resting in its own completeness
Can have worth or beauty: but alone,
Because it leads and lends to further sweetness,
Fuller, higher, deeper than its own.
Life is only bright when it proceedeth
Toward a truer, deeper life above;
Human love is sweetest when it leadeth
To a more divine and perfect love.

God around us as a shield, God above and within us as an ideal, God lifting up the tired and sorrowful face—this was David's threefold conception of his relation with God. All around men were filled with wrath at him. He heard their harsh voices, and what they said. Nevertheless he comforted, and stayed his heart with the words, *But Thou, O Lord*. Ah, what an instant change they make!

We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel, how weak—we rise, how full of power!

Ah, these *Buts*! What a difference they make in our lives. There is always the hedge of God's care, always an illimitable reserve of power and help within our reach, of which we may avail ourselves; and we are so sure of it, that we lay ourselves down in peace to sleep, though the foe in thousands encamps around.

*Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is
godly for Himself.* *Psa. iv. 3.*

THE Lord sets apart for His own enjoyment.
—“A garden enclosed is my sister.” Out of the wild prairie Christ encloses favored bits of land, that they may become fair gardens in which to walk. God must have spirits with which He can commune; and therefore He shuts selected ones away in sick chambers, in loneliness, and in prisons, that there may be nothing to divert them from the holy intercourse with Himself which is His refreshment and delight.

The Lord sets apart for fellowship in intercessory prayer.—He leads three of the Apostles into the shadows of Gethsemane, that they may add their intercessions with His. In each church there is a favored band to whom He tells His secret anxiety for other souls, and whom He leads out in prayer on the behalf of them and of the world.

The Lord sets apart for service.—Those that separate themselves from evil become vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use. Do not be surprised if you are withdrawn from the madding crowd, from the ambitions and interests of earlier years; it is the Lord's way of engaging you for special service.

We can never forget how the Holy Ghost bade the early Church separate Barnabas and Saul to their appointed ministry. They were separated unto the Holy Ghost. A similar separation may become ours. Let us live in the world as those who are set apart for God, like the Temple vessels that might not be put, as Belshazzar attempted to put them, to idolatrous and lascivious purposes. Oh to know what God means when He puts His reserve on the soul, and says, This is my rest forever, here will I dwell!

In the morning will I order my prayer unto Thee.

Psa. v. 3 (R. V.).

IT is very important to consider *the order* of our petitions. No man would approach an earthly sovereign without taking time to consider how best to present his requests. He would consider the pleas on which to rely, the arguments to present, and the method in which he would be most likely to carry his case. Upon entering the presence of the great King, our Father, would it not well repay us to stay on the threshold for a moment to ask what petitions we are about to proffer, the order in which we should arrange them, and the reasons we should adduce?

It is manifestly a mistake to pray at haphazard. There is too much random praying with us all. We do not return again and again to the same petition, pressing it home with all humility and reverence, and arguing the case, as Abraham did his for the cities of the plain.

Study the order of the Lord's prayer—the adoration and prostration of soul before God prior to supplication for definite gifts; the acquiescence in the Divine will before the prayer for daily bread; the entreaty for forgiveness before there can be a thought of deliverance from evil. Or consider the order of the High Priest's intercession for His own in John xvii. before He pours out His soul in prayer for the world. Lay the wood "in order." Enter the temple of prayer through successive courts—Confession, Absolution, Ascriptions of Praise, the Te Deum, the broken sentences, the outburst of intercession, as suggested by the Church of England liturgy. At the same time, do not forget to be perfectly natural. Whilst the soul ascends the temple by regular steps, let there be the glad conviction of the tender love of the waiting Father.

And Thou, O Lord, how long?

Psa. vi. 3 (R. V.).

YOU have been long in coming, love says. So miserly are we of the minutes, so leaden-paced is the beat of the pendulum, when our heart stands on the tiptoe of expectation. Moments lengthen to hours when we suffer and await deliverance, just as hours contract to moments when the heart is young and gay.

How long, Lord, ere the trial cease?—When we are entering into the furnace, we like to make bargains with God that it shall not last beyond a certain hour; but He never tells us, lest patience might miss her perfect work. He says simply, It is enough to suffer one moment at a time.

How long, Lord, ere deliverance arrive?—Long ago we sent for reinforcements; and since then the battle has been waxing more fierce. We have looked eagerly to the horizon to see the relieving column, clear-cut on the sky line; but in vain. We think we can hold out no more. We have strained at the oar to the last degree of strength, and if some deliverance does not come to us, the fourth watch of night will see us drifting helplessly to destruction. "Where is thy God?" the enemy cries; and we are tempted to think ourselves forsaken and forgotten.

How long, Lord, ere the Advent break?—He said that He would come quickly—but the weary centuries pass; and, strain our ears as we may, we cannot detect His princely footfall along the corridor of time.

Cease, fond heart, thy complaining. Delay is not denial. He counts a thousand years as a day. He is coming on the wings of every wind; already He is nigh, even at the doors. Never a moment too early—but not a moment too late.

Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity. Psa. vii. 8.

SPECIFIC charges were being made against David, of which he knew himself to be absolutely innocent. He would not have dared to challenge God thus, if the whole of his life were passing under review. In that case there would have been no hesitation in confessing that, taken generally, he was a sinful man. Similarly, God's children are often accused of wrongs of which they are absolutely innocent. In such case they have a right to declare their innocence before their fellows; then if this avail not to procure their acquittal, they must turn to God, and ask Him to interpose.

But what a question this suggests! Are you able, child of God, to declare that, as far as you have the light, you are living righteously, soberly, godly, in this present world? Is your life *right-wise*—that is, four-square with the demands of God's law, able to bear the test of His line and plummet? Can you assert your integrity? Integrity is derived from the Latin *integer*, a whole, a number unbroken by fractions. Are you whole-hearted? or, to use the grand old word, is your heart perfect before God? If it be, it matters very little what men shall say of your character. If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God on this behalf. What is said is aimed rather at the Master than the servant. God becomes responsible for your vindication. He will arise and show Himself strong, putting to silence the enemy and avenger. Trust your reputation with God, and, in the meanwhile, go on doing His will. There is no harm in calmly and temperately attesting your innocence; but if this avails not to stay the storm, bend before it. Do not appeal to law. God will vindicate you.

Thou madest him to have dominion.

Psa. viii. 6.

YES, broken, beaten, fallen, O child of man, thou wast made to have dominion. Not only over cattle, birds, and fish, but over thine own wonderful nature. Within thee there is a realm as full of multitudinous life as Paradise was when God brought the animals to Adam that he might name them; and over all this thou wast meant to rule. Yea, thou wert made to have dominion also over the wicked spirits that are thy sworn foes. A royal, regnant, victorious life was that which thy Creator inbreathed. There is no reason, on God's side, or in thy original constitution, why thou shouldst not exercise thy dominion. Remember, thou wast made to have dominion.

We see not yet all things put under us. There is open revolt and anarchy within. The will resembles the ancient kings whose sway was limited by proud and strong barons. The animal creation largely defies us, and is in this the symbol of our loss of authority everywhere. But look away to Jesus. This old psalm is fulfilled in Him. His glorious nature rose, by its inherent glory, to the right hand of power. All authority is His in heaven and on earth. And in proportion as we identify ourselves with Him, and receive His life, we regain our lost dominion. He makes us kings and priests unto God. We share a life which neither death nor the devil can master.

What shall we say of the excellency of His name, who is not only our Creator, but our Redeemer, and who at such great cost to Himself has replaced on our brows the crown that sin tore from them? He made us to have dominion by the word of creation. He made us kings unto God *by His blood*. His name shall, therefore, be honored through all the earth.

They that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee.

Psa. ix. 10.

WE do not trust, because we do not know. If we were once to know God, it would seem as absurd to doubt Him as to fear that we should fly off at a tangent from the surface of the earth. Men complain of their little faith: the remedy is in their own hands; let them set themselves to know God. We may know *about* God, and yet not know *Him*. We may hear what others say about Him, but have no direct and personal acquaintance. "That I may know Him," said the Apostle.

The materials for the knowledge of God are all around thee; make use of them. Think of the promises by which God has bound Himself to succor those that come to Him; of the record of His gracious interpositions for His saints; of the necessity that He should maintain His character and reputation in the face of the universe.

Above all, argue, as Jesus bade, from your own heart. Would you give stones to hungry babes, and scorpions into childish hands? Would you desert a forlorn and hunted soul that trusted? Would you insist on a certain measure of agony before stepping in to deliver? Would you take delight in inflicting needless anguish? And will God? *Trust* may be read as the superlative of true. To trust is to count God *true*, though circumstances belie; to count Him *truer* than the melancholy forebodings of our hearts; to count Him our *truest* and tenderest Friend. "Yet let God be true, though every man is proved to be a liar."

But for all this, you must make time. You cannot know a friend in hurried interviews, much less God. So you must steep yourself in deep, long thoughts of His nearness and love.

Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord?

Psa. x. 1.

MEN in sorrow do not always speak wisely; and they ask many questions which God does not answer. Here is one. God does not stand afar off and hide Himself in times of trouble. As the Psalmist sings, in a happier mood, "He is a very present help in time of trouble." But He permits trouble to pursue us, as though He were indifferent to its overwhelming pressure; that we may be brought to an end of ourselves, and led to discover the treasures of darkness, the unmeasurable gains of tribulation. No cross, no crown. No pain, no gain.

We may be sure that He who permits the suffering is with us in it. The form of the Fourth may be hard to distinguish, but it is there in the fire. It may be that we shall only see Him when the trial is passing; but we must dare to believe that He never leaves the crucible. Our eyes are holden; and we cannot behold Him whom our soul loveth. It is dark—the bandages blind us so that we cannot see the form of our High Priest. But He is there, deeply touched. Let us not rely on feeling, but on faith in His unswerving fidelity; and though we see Him not, let us talk to Him in whispers as though we could detect Him.

"I take the pain, Lord Jesus, from Thine own hand,
The strength to bear it bravely, Thou wilt command."

Directly we begin to speak to Jesus, as being literally present, though His presence is veiled, there comes an answering voice which shows that He is in the shadow, keeping watch upon His own. Do not be afraid of the darkness. Behind the cloud, the sun is shining. Little child, your Father is as near when you journey through the dark tunnel as when under the open heaven! Go nearer, and you will feel Him!

The Lord trieth the righteous.

Psa. xi. 5.

DO not be surprised if you are passing through trials. The righteous Lord is exercising you toward righteousness, that your face may ever behold His in unswerving communion. As the trainer of a young athlete will place him, now in one position, and again in another, to call certain muscles into play, to strengthen them by use, and to make the whole organization supple and subservient to the impulses of the soul, so God tries us—to call into operation, and test by use, each faculty of our being.

Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring us to His feet,
Lay us low, and keep us there.

There is a great difference between the temptings of Satan and the tryings of the Lord. The former are intended to make us fall; the great adversary takes pleasure in showing how weak and sinful we are, and in casting us down to destruction. The latter, that we may be led out toward faith, patience, courage, meekness, and other worldliness. "Tribulation *worketh* patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." Whatever spiritual power is latent within us, we may be unaware of its value or helpfulness till it is called into exercise by trial. But when once it has been summoned into manifestation, it becomes the invaluable possession of all after time.

There is this consolation in trial, that at least we are not reprobates. The Lord trieth *the righteous*. The lapidary does not waste his time in cutting common pebbles. If we endure chastisement, we are clearly not bastards, but sons. Our Father loves us too much to let us miss the rich fruit that is to reward us when all the pruning is over.

The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth. *Psa. xii. 6.*

WHAT a contrast is presented in this Psalm between God's words and man's ! " They speak vanity, with flattering lip and double heart." God never flatters ; His words are absolutely pure because they have passed through the furnace of His holiness, but they are therefore absolutely reliable and trustworthy.

As silver *enriches* its owner, so does the Word of God enrich its lovers. Nothing so strengthens the intellect, clears the judgment, enlarges the views, purifies the taste, quickens the imagination, and educates the whole man. The humblest day-laborer who imbibes the Bible becomes rich in thought and speech, and able to dispense his riches to others.

As silver is *beautiful* to the eye, so fair is the Word of God. After a boy born blind had been suddenly possessed of sight through an operation by a skillful oculist, his mother led him out-of-doors, took off the bandages, and gave him his first view of sunshine, sky, and flowers. " Oh, mother," he cried, " why did you never tell me it was so beautiful ? " With starting tears, she said, " I tried to tell you, my dear, but you could not understand me." We need opened eyes, and then the Bible is more to be desired than fine gold.

As silver is *pure*, so is the Word of God ; and it purifies. It has been the main purifying agent of the world. Though it deals with the corruptions of the human heart, it does so in such a delicate and holy manner as to excite within us something of the abhorrence of the Holy God. Like the passage of water through a sieve, it cleanses the heart and life.

I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.

Psa. xiii. 6.

HERE is the man who had sorrow in his heart all the day breaking into song! We do not find that his troubles were any less. The enemy was still exalted over him, and boasted of having prevailed; it seemed indeed as though he must soon sleep the sleep of death. But he never let go his trust. Whatever were his outward discomforts and trials, he clung to his God and waited patiently for Him; with the result that out of his stormy griefs he built a Bethel, and in the midst of his anguish broke out into song.

When we are sitting under the shadow of severe trial, God can wrap us about with the garment of praise, and fill our mouths with singing. Although the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vines, yet the soul may rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of salvation. You cannot starve a man who is feeding on God's promises; and you cannot make that man or woman wretched who has a clean conscience, the smile of God, and the love of Jesus in the soul.

When brave old Thomas Halyburton lost his much-loved son, he made this record: "This day has been a day to be remembered. O my soul, never forget what this day I reached. My soul had smiles that almost wasted nature. Oh, what a sweet day! About half-an-hour after the Sabbath, my child, after a sharp conflict, slept pleasantly in Jesus, to whom pleasantly he was so often given. . . . Jesus came to me in the third watch of the night, walking upon the waters. . . . He stilled the tempest in my soul, and lo! there was a great calm." When God is bereaving us of all else, He may so fill us with Himself that we shall magnify His bountifulness.

When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people.

Psa. xiv. 7.

IT is good to have an eye on the future, even though we get sometimes a little weary of waiting, and impatient of delay. Here a captive soul transports itself to the hours when its captivity shall be ended; and although it cannot altogether suppress the "Oh!" of longing desire, it dilates with ecstasy, as it anticipates the outburst of joy that shall hail the Divine deliverance.

Let us look on and up. Bunyan tells us that the heart of the Pilgrim "waxed warm about the place whither he was going." A real lover of Christ, who knows something of the law of sin in his members, and of the dull weight of this mortal tabernacle, is apt to have, at times, eager desires for His home and His glorious inheritance. Paul was one of the most eager of workers, but he was ever dwelling on the blessed hope.

"When," exclaimed Baxter, "when, O my soul, hast thou most forgot thy wintry sorrows? Is it not when thou hast got above, closest to Jesus Christ, and hast conversed with Him, and viewed the mansions of glory, and filled thyself with sweet foretastes, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world?" Such devout anticipations do not slacken our work down here during this little while. It is said of Samuel Rutherford that he was always studying, always preaching, and always visiting the sick; but it was he who exclaimed, "Oh, time, run fast! Oh, fair day, when wilt thou dawn? Oh, shadows, flee away! Oh, well-beloved Bridegroom, be Thou to me like the roe or the young hart on the mountains!"

"The best is yet to be—
The last, for which the first was made."

Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle ? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill ? Psa. xv. 1 (marg.).

THIS holy soul was not content to stand in the outer court without the sacred tent ; he coveted to enter where the High Priest entered, and to live there. It was impossible then ; the way into the Holiest was not made manifest. No ordinary worshipper might pass the Vail, and the high priest who passed it once a year remained but a few moments.

How marvellously different our experience may be ! We have boldness to enter into the holy place, and remain there, by the blood of Jesus ; and, by the enablings of His Priesthood, we may spend our entire lives under the consciousness of the presence and favor of God. It is much like the servants of Solomon, to stand before our King, and to hear Him speaking, bidding us either to perform His errands, or fold the wings of activity in wrapt communion.

This is not your experience ? Then look carefully through the conditions which this Psalm enumerates. Perhaps you are not transparently truthful ; or your tongue is not carefully controlled ; or you are not perfectly honorable in your business dealings ; or you do not know the power of the blood of Christ, as it cleanses from dead works to serve the living God.

It is worth any sacrifice to maintain this habit of indwelling the Most Holy Place. Ask that it may become your second nature. The Lord Jesus will secure this, since He was appointed for us in things that pertain to God. Whenever anything in the inner life seems faulty and deficient, we may turn with unabated confidence to our High Priest, asking Him to adjust it, to bring us into the presence of God, and to keep us there.

Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades.

Psa. xvi. 10.

THIS hymn is forever sacred because of its application by the Holy Ghost to our Saviour's resurrection (Acts ii.). It was as though our Lord has stayed His soul upon these words as He left this world and entered the unseen. The last words He uttered were of committal to His Father, and then He commenced to traverse the land of shadow. "He that ascended is He that first descended into the lower parts of the earth." The Apostle Peter says that He went to visit the spirits in prison. Whither He went is not material—it is enough for our purpose that He sang, as He went, this hymn of immortal hope. Sure that He was the Father's beloved, He knew that He would not be left in Hades, nor suffered to see corruption. He knew that there was a path of life somewhere, which God would show.

Whenever you are stepping down into the dark, unable to see a hand's-breadth before you, and just letting the foot fall from step to step—it may be because of some act of obedience to conscience, or because you are called to enter the unknown and untried, or even death itself—cheer your heart with this holy Psalm. God will never desert the soul that absolutely honors and obeys Him. His way leads to the light through the dark, to the deathless through death, to the abounding fruit-bearing through desertion and loneliness. How lonely the vine-stock is through the winter! Follow Him, He will show.

"She is sinking very fast," whispered an attendant in the dying chamber of a godly woman. "No, no," was the quick response of the departing saint, who had overheard the words: "no; I am not sinking; I am in the arms of my Saviour."

*I shall behold Thy face in righteousness. I shall
be satisfied when I awake.* *Psa. xvii. 15.*

TO a good man, then, this is the world of dream and shadow, and death is the awakening. We are like men asleep in some chamber that looks toward the eastern sky. Outside is the day with its revealing beams, but our heavy eyes are closed to it all. "Here *and* there, some lighter sleeper with thinner eyelids or face turned to the sun is half conscious of a vague brightness and feels the light, though he sees not the wealth of color it reveals. Such souls are our saints and prophets; but most of us sleep on unconscious." But the moment is at hand when we shall awake and start up and declare ourselves fools for having counted dreams as realities, whilst we were oblivious to the eternal realities.

When we awake we shall behold the face of God. Likeness is properly "form," and is the same word employed in reference to Moses, who saw the similitude of the Lord. We shall see Him as He is. There will be an outward revelation and manifestation of His lovely and holy character, and it will satisfy us completely. "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And we shall be satisfied. The mind will be satisfied with His truth, the heart with His love, the will with His authority. We shall need nothing else. Heaven itself, with its outspread mystery of beauty, will not divert our gaze from God, nor contribute to our satisfaction. To know God, to stand before Him, to realize that we are accepted in the righteousness of the Well-beloved—this will be enough forevermore.

"This life's a dream, an empty show;
But the bright world to which I go
Hath joys substantial and sincere:
When shall I wake, and find me there?"

Thy gentleness hath made me great.

Psa. xviii. 35.

THE Nasmyth hammer which can pulverize blocks of tough metal, will break the shell of a nut without hurting the kernel. In this it resembles this Psalm, in the earlier part of which there is one of the grandest descriptions that words can give of God's mighty interposition on behalf of His threatened child. But here we are told that it is the Divine gentleness which has made him great. It is as though God's *power* were exerted against our foes, whilst our education is undertaken by His love.

Review your life. See the perils from which you have been rescued; the process of your education; the slow degrees by which you have climbed to any eminence of Christian character; the method by which you have attained the power of influencing others: is it not all attributable to the gentleness of the Good Shepherd? Not by sudden cataclysms and catastrophes; not by the earthquake, the fire, or the hurricane; not even by the stringent requirements of law; but by a succession of tenderest, gentlest movements of the Divine Spirit. He has remonstrated in whispered accents; He has seemed grieved and sad; He has turned and looked; He has sent a message by a woman's lips; He has put a little child into your life to lead you; He has poured on you one continual stream of sunshine. Now, it has been the distilling of dew; and again, soft showers on the mown grass: and through all, the purpose has run of eliminating the self-life, and leading you to the full stature of the perfect man. The strongest soul I ever knew, one who seemed to have been fashioned by God's mightiest strokes, was wont, in life's eventide, to attribute all to the effect of God's gentleness.

Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.

Psa. xix. 12.

IT is not likely that we shall be kept from the great transgression unless we are preserved from presumptuous sins; and these in turn will befall us unless we have been cleansed from hidden faults. Just as the germ of disease taken into the system will presently reveal itself in an outburst of malignant fever, so hidden faults flower out into presumptuous sins, and these into great transgression. "Then lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and the sin, when it is *full-grown* bringeth forth death."

First, we need forgiveness for secret sins. The Jewish law made large provision for sins of ignorance. A man might unawares walk across a grave, or touch some article of furniture which was ceremonially unclean, and so become defiled. Even though unconscious of actual transgression, he would find his communion with God broken. Thus, after the holiest day we have ever spent we need to ask for cleansing in the precious blood, for sins which God has discerned, but which in the twilight of our ignorance, and because we compared ourselves with those beneath us in spiritual attainment, have escaped notice.

Next, we need deliverance from the love and power of sin, in lower depths than we have ever realized. We desire to pass muster at the bar, not only of our neighbors and ourselves, but of God. We desire that the Spirit should antagonize the flesh in depths below the reach of the plumb-line of our consciousness. We desire the inner purity of heart. But this is peculiarly God's prerogative. It is *His* work to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit. "Cleanse *THOU me.*"

Now know I that the Lord saveth His Anointed.

Psa. xx. 6.

THIS was no doubt true of David as the anointed king of Israel, and of the Lord Jesus for whom the Father hath promised that He will subdue all things under Him; but it is also true of every saint who has been anointed with the Holy Ghost. *Christian means an anointed one.* Alas, that in so many cases the name is a misnomer! And men cannot claim the saving strength of God's right hand because they have not bent head and heart beneath the chrism of the Holy Spirit. How is it with thee? Art thou included in what Paul said, "He that anointeth us is God"; and in what John said, "The anointing which has once been received, abideth"? If so, there can be no doubt that Jehovah will ever save thee with a present-tense salvation. He saveth those whom He anointeth with the saving strength of His right hand.

Dost thou doubt this? Sayest thou that the annoyances and solicitations, the pitfalls and snares, the antagonisms and temptations of thy life, are so great as to offer an insuperable obstacle to thy entire deliverance from fret, irritation, and failure? Then turn to the marvellous phrase that follows, and tell me, if thou canst, the meaning of the saving strength of God's right hand. Is not God's right hand strong enough? And notice that its strength is pledged not to destroy, but to save. All the strength of God's right hand goes forth to save unto the uttermost. Look away from adversary and temptation, and keep murmuring to thyself, "He shall save me to-day, and always, with the saving strength of His right hand." And is not the right hand of the Most High the place where Jesus sits? Is not the right hand of God moved by the love that died on Calvary? "He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not."

Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.
Psa. xxi. 3.

GOD is always beforehand with us. The word "prevent" is not as familiar to our modern English as it was when the Bible was translated. Then it meant "that which comes or goes before." And the idea is that God goes before us, preparing our way, and laying up supplies of grace to anticipate our need. This is the meaning of the prayer: "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings."

Go into the chamber where the mother is preparing for the advent of a little babe. You have no difficulty in telling what the wants of the child will be by all the articles which her tender forethought is providing; and when presently the little one opens its eyes in this strange, new world, it finds that it has been prevented with the blessings of goodness.

For ages prior to the appearance of man on the earth, the great heart of God was exercised in preparing for him. To please his ear, Music tuned her lyre; to satisfy his eye, the Great Artist wrought variety of color and form; to warm him, seams of coal were laid down; to give him drink, rivers poured from crystal urns of snow-clad peaks; and Adam might have adored God's prevenient grace. Think, for instance, of the color, the light and scent and driving-power in rock-oils!

Still more is this the case in the kingdom of redemption. God has stored all the blessings of goodness in Jesus. In eternal ages, in the incarnation, the cross, the ascension, He has prepared beforehand for every possible need of our spiritual life. Whenever you pray, remember that you are not to procure unthought-of help; but to avail yourself of the blessings of goodness with which God has anticipated your coming.

He hath done it.

Psa. xxii. 31 (R. V.).

THIS is the Hebrew equivalent for the words, "It is finished." Surely it was meet that the Psalm of the Cross, which our Lord must have recited to Himself during those hours of anguish, should close with this triumphant outburst.

Finished, the ceremonial law.—It had served its purpose in prefiguring the person and work of Jesus; but now the rending of the veil betokened the abolition of the forms of the earlier dispensation. The things which could be shaken passed, that those which could not be shaken might remain.

Finished, the fulfillment of prophecy.—Very diverse predictions had met, and were closed, as gates are when the king has passed through. That He should be a King and a Sufferer; a Priest and a Victim; a Lion of the tribe of Judah, and a Lamb for substitution.

Finished, the work which was given to Him to do.—The Messiah was to be cut off, not for Himself, to finish transgressions, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. And each of these great ends was realized.

Finished, the work of atonement.—As the Substitute and Sin-bearer, the Lord Jesus stood with the sins of the race meeting on Him; but when He died He put them away by the sacrifice of Himself. They were borne into the land of forgetfulness, from which they can never be recovered. The demand of Divine justice was satisfied. Mercy and truth had met. Righteousness and peace embraced. And this cry of a finished redemption shall be finally crowned by a cry of complete restitution (Rev. xxi. 6).

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

Psa. xxiii. 6.

We are well escorted, with a Shepherd in front and these twin angels behind! Some one called them watch-dogs; but I prefer to think of them as angels. Do you not see the special beauty of these fair, strong angel-forms following? We make such mistakes, give unnecessary pain, leave work ill-done and half-done, often succeed rather in raising dust than cleaning the rooms which we would fain sweep! It is good to think that two such angels follow close upon our track as we go through life, putting kind constructions on our actions, disentangling knots, making good deficiencies, and preventing the consequences of ill-advised and inconsiderate action pursuing us to the bitter end.

There are mothers who are always tidying up after their children. The little ones have had a rare time, which have left confusion and disorder; but the mother comes, mending the broken toys, stitching the rent garments, making everything neat and tidy. As the ambulance corps goes over the battlefield; as time festoons with verdure ruins and decay; as love puts the most tender construction on word and act—so the love of God follows us.

His goodness imputes to us the noble motive, though the act itself has been a failure; credits us with what was in our heart; reckons us the full wage, though we have only wrought one hour. His mercy forgives, obliterates the traces of our sins from His heart, undoes their ill-effect so far as possible toward others, and treats us as if we had never transgressed. Do not fear the future. God's angels do not tire. What has been will be, in all worlds, and to all eternity. *All* the days, even those in which Satan seems to have obtained permission to sift.

And the King of Glory shall come in.

Psa. xxiv. 7, 9.

THIS is what we all want. We must have the King of Glory *within*. To have Him without, even though He be on the Throne, will not avail. He must come in to abide, to reign, to sway His sceptre, to keep the everlasting doors through which He has passed. This has been our difficulty, that those doors have so often been forced. We want one who is strong and mighty to keep them strongly barred against our mortal foe.

This Psalm was first realized in the entrance of the Ark into Mount Zion, when God went up with a merry noise. It is supposed that the first part of the verse was a challenge from the warders of the ancient gates, whilst the second was a reply from the escorting band that accompanied the sacred emblem. It was a moment of vast triumph when the Ark of the King of Glory passed to the ancient city of the Jebusites.

A still greater fulfillment took place when Jesus, having overcome the sharpness of death, victor over sin and the grave, mighty in battle, vanquished principalities and powers, and entered the city of God. Then to and fro these challenges and answers flew between the angels that awaited Him, and those who accompanied.

But the most vital fulfillment is when the heart opens to receive Him, and He enters, to go out no more, and to hold it against all comers. Oh, beaten and baffled saint, it is impossible for thee to fail when Jesus, all-victorious, garrisons thy heart! He is strong and mighty. Dost thou want strength? It is in the strong Son of God. Dost thou want might? He is all-mighty. Dost thou want deliverance from thy foes? He is mighty in battle.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

Psa. xxv. 14.

WHAT marvellous words! They remind one of the sapphire work which the elders saw at the foot of the throne, and which was like "the body of heaven for clearness." Three different renderings are suggested by the R. v.

The Secret of the Lord.—To some it is permitted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. To these the white stone is given, on which is engraven a name, which only he knows that receives it. There are secret passages of love between Christ and the believing soul, which it would not be lawful for it to utter. High fellowship: deep blessedness. Things which eye hath not seen. Jesus revealed His secrets when Judas had gone forth. "Wherefore askest thou after My name," He said to Manoah, "seeing it is secret?"

The Counsel of the Lord.—"His Name shall be called . . . Counsellor." He draws near to those that fear to grieve Him, and gives them counsel. He instructs them in the way that He chooses for them; He guides them in His truth and teaches them; He guides them in judgment; and tells them, as He did Abraham, what He is about to do.

The Friendship of the Lord.—"Ye are My friends," said Jesus, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." He longs for friends—those to whom He can tell His desires, on whom He may impose implicit confidence, and who will be so taken up with Him as to be indifferent to everything else, their one purpose to do His least bidding. Oh to be honored with the personal friendship of Jesus! It were a rare privilege to be entrusted with His secrets, and to hear Him say, "I have not called you servants, but friends."

I will wash mine hands in innocency.

Psa. xxvi. 6.

THE Psalmist realized that he could not avail himself of all that was typified by the altar, unless, so far as he knew himself, he had washed his hands in innocency. But he also knew that the washing, to be effective, must be in costlier waters than those of his own innocency. The soul requires a Saviour who comes by water and blood, not by water only.

The compassing of the altar is probably a picturesque way of describing the joyous or penitent circle of worshippers that gathered around the altar; and which needed to be prepared for by the usual lustrations, "The baptisms and laying on of hands." We must separate ourselves from known sin, and wash our hands in innocency, if we are to enjoy the blessings of the altar and its sacred associations.

There is the sacrifice of the *burnt-offering*, which stands for Christ's perfectness and entire devotedness to God on our behalf. But how can we be utterly given up to God unless, so far as we know, we are innocent of presumptuous and cherished sin?

There are the sacrifices of the *meal-offering* and the *peace-offering*. But how can we feed on Christ, or feast with Him in holy rapture, whilst we are concealing the stains of the hands that take the food?

There is the sacrifice of the *sin-offering*. But is it not a sacrilege to claim a share in its blessing if we permit those very sins which cost the Saviour agony and tears? No; we must come out and be separate; we must be willing for God to examine and prove us; we must hate the congregation of the wicked, their conversation and ways; we must occupy ourselves perpetually with the Divine loving-kindness and truth. So only can we compass the altar of God, and taste its comfort and help.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after. *Psa. xxvii. 4.*

ONE purpose dominated prayer and life. It was never long absent from the Psalmist's thought. The men of one idea are irresistible. The arrowy stream will force its way through the toughest soil. See that all the prayers, incidents, and circumstances of life subserve one intense purpose. String all the beads on one thread. When the eye is single, the whole body is full of light.

The Psalmist's purpose.—What a blessing that the Psalmist's purpose may be ours! To dwell in the house of the Lord is to live within the veil in fellowship with God, in the habitual recollection of His presence. To behold His beauty is to keep looking off unto Jesus. To inquire in His Temple is to commune with the Lord about all the concerns of home and business, of church and commonwealth. In senses of which the material Temple could give but a faint conception, we may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives.

The Psalmist's search.—Let us seek after this as well as pray for it. Let it be the fixed purpose and resolution of every day. Let us begin with it in the morning, and at every spare moment remember that we have boldness to stand in the Most Holy Place. Oh to be as intent on this high quest as the man of science to discover nature's secrets; as the business man to make a fortune; as the brave explorer to extort the secret from the Polar Seas!

True prayer will never be presumptuous. It will not ask God to do for us what we may do for ourselves. It will ask as though all depended on asking, but it will seek as though all depended on seeking.

“Thrice blest, whose *lives* are faithful prayers:
What souls possess themselves so pure?”

Feed them also, and lift them up forever.

Psa. xxviii. 9.

THE people of God are here compared to a flock, scattered over many hills, marked by differing brands, sheltering in varied folds, but under the care of one Shepherd, and being conducted to one Home.

The holy soul is as eager for the welfare of the Lord's "beautiful flock" as He is. Whatever is dear to the loved one is dear to the lover. You cannot love the pastor without taking a keen and constant interest in all that interests him, and especially in the sheep of his pasture, and the people of his hand. Hence when you are nearest the Lord, you are almost certain to begin pleading for His inheritance, and saying: "Save Thy people; bless them, feed them, and lift them up forever."

There is an exquisite suggestion in the R. v. : "Bear them up forever." The Good Shepherd bare His flock through the desert, and carried them all the days of old. It is as easy for Him to bear a flock, as a single lamb. Jesus does not simply lead us to green pastures and still waters, He bears us, and He bears us up, and He does so forever. Never tiring, though He imparts infinite rest; never ceasing for a moment His shepherd-care. Are you depressed to-day? Are there strong influences dragging you down? Does your soul cleave to the dust? Let those strong arms and that tender breast lift you up forever. A dying child asked her father to place his arms beneath her weary, emaciated body. "Lift me," she said. He did so. "A little higher." He did so. "Higher, father." And when he had lifted her as high as he could, the convulsive movement proved that Christ had come to lift her up forever.

In His temple everything saith, Glory.

Psa. xxix. 9 (R. V.).

THIS Psalm describes a thunderstorm gathering over the Mediterranean, passing with devastating fury over Palestine, and finally dissolving in floods of rain on the pasture-lands of Bashan and Gilead. But how differently such a scene is regarded! To the man of the world it presents an interesting study, or awakes spasms of fear: to the man of God, contemplating the scene from his safe hiding in the Temple, it seems as though nature, with a myriad voices, were proclaiming the glory of God. Many storms are sweeping athwart the world just now. Our standpoint for watching them must be God's presence-chamber.

Somehow, everything that has been, is, and shall be; all that seems startling and dreadful; all that excites fear and foreboding—shall conduce to the glory of God. Wait, O child of God, in patient trust; Jehovah is King, and He shall sit as King forever; all is under law. "Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things"; and to Him shall be the glory forever.

Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost: does every whit of it say, Glory? I know of few things that stir my heart more than the repeated ascription of "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." But is that the refrain of our life? Outside there may be confusion and storm, wild chaos and desolation; but see to it that from your heart's shrine there rises moment after moment the ascription of "Glory be to Thee, O Thou most High."

Glory to God, to God, he saith.
Knowledge of suffering entereth,
And life is perfected in death.

*Weeping may endure for the night; but joy
cometh in the morning.* *Psa. xxx. 5.*

THE Hebrew might be rendered, "Weeping may come in to lodge at even" (R. v., *marg.*). See, at nightfall, a black-vestured guest comes to thy heart. Thou must let him in; he brings a warrant from your King for his quartering and entertainment. But he is only a lodger; he has no abiding-place with thee; at daybreak he must be gone. Canst thou not bear with him for these brief hours? It is only for the brief space of an Eastern summer-night. Let the first tint of the dawn flush yon sky, he will go. Like the ghosts of fable, he dies in the light.

Now, see, the morning breaks! Who is this hurrying up the hill, and knocking at the door? Hark to his joyous shout! Who is this? Ah! It is Joy. The child of the morning light! The firstborn of Resurrection! And he comes not as a lodger, but as the Lord and Master of Life, to abide forever. Oh, welcome him in the name of the Lord, and throw open each chamber and each closet in your heart, that all may be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And as he enters, sorrow and sighing flee away. They have passed out at the back as he came in at the front.

Joy in the morning at the resurrection of Jesus: Joy in the coming of the Saviour for His bride: Joy as the Millennium breaks on the world: Joy when the Eternal Day comes to gladden those who have drunk of Christ's sorrow, and shall share His bliss.

Child of God, be on the outlook to welcome Joy. Do not fear his advent, nor thrust him away. Milton's *L'Allegro* is a truer presentation of Christian experience than *Il Penseroso*. "Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Thou hast known my soul in adversities.

Psa. xxxi. 7.

MEN have a way of forgetting their companions when they fall into adversity. They do not know them or visit them, or recognize them if they meet them in the street. But the love of God is always most tender and considerate then. He seeks us out when the sky is shadowed, and life is overcast with sombre tints. Adversity, so far from alienating Him, draws Him closer, and brings out His tenderest, loveliest traits. He knows us in adversity.

It is only when we are overtaken by adversity that we are revealed in the innermost depths of our nature. God knows us in adversity. "Thou shalt remember," said Moses, "all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart." What revelations of unsubdued pride and imperious self-will are afforded, when we are searched and tested by the fiery trial of pain!

But the margin (R. v.) suggests another rendering: "Thou hast known the adversities of my soul." Is it not enough that God should know? Need we go to all our friends and explain to them all we are called to endure? Is not this a needless addition to their sorrow, and the sorrow of the world? What a glorious piece of advice the Master gave, when He said, "Anoint thine head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but to thy Father which seeth in secret."

"Thou know'st our bitterness!—our joys are thine!
No stranger Thou to all our wanderings wild!
But yet Thou call'st us Brethren! Sweet repose
Is in that word;—the Lord who dwells on high
Knows all, yet loves us better than He knows."

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.

Psa. xxxii. 8.

“LEARN of Me,” said the Master: and indeed there is no teacher like Him; no school like His. We stand at the door of the school-house, saying, “What I know not, teach Thou me”; and He does not hesitate to undertake our case. But there are several points of difference from our methods. In Christ’s school there is but one Master for all the scholars, and they all learn from the same books; the pupils begin with the upper classes and end with the lowest; and those that are most proficient, and have been longest under His tuition, are most conscious of their ignorance. There are no holidays; but every day is a holy day. The school never breaks up; but the students leave it for Home, and the prizes are sent after them, and given when they arrive.

We need more than personal instruction; we are travelling through an unknown land, and require direction for the way. This also is guaranteed; but not as in the cases of tourists, who extract all information from their friends before they start from home, as to the places they are about to visit. Our Guide accompanies us. He counsels us with His eye upon us, detecting every pitfall and chasm, and warning us; perhaps even guiding us by the movement of His eye.

How greatly then are we in need of the quickened sense! The eye fixed on His eye; the ear opened to His slightest whisper; the foot quick to place itself down in His footprints. The horse and mule need bit and bridle; but it is enough for us if the heart fears to miss the least indication of the Master’s will. Be willing to know; it then becomes His part to make thee know somehow. If not in one way, then in another.

The earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Lord.

Psa. xxxiii. 5 (R. V.).

THE Psalmist means that there is no spot in it where the traces and footprints of God's love may not be discerned, if only the eyes and the heart are opened. Just as every corner of a room which faces the south is filled with the morning sunlight, unless artificial and violent means are adopted to keep it out, so every part of human life is full of God's loving-kindness, unless it is blocked out by sin. You think that your lot is absolutely destitute of God's loving-kindness; but may not your eyes be blinded? May there not be more than you suppose? May you not be so occupied with the one irksome thing in it as to be oblivious to ten thousand marks of tender compassion and unobtrusive mercy?

Your chamber is very bare and comfortless; but it is part of the earth, and it is therefore full of God's loving-kindness: look around for it. Your home seems uncongenial and trying; but it must be full to the brim of loving-kindness. Your daily life is hard and difficult; but there is as much loving-kindness in it as if it were easy and prosperous. There is indeed more loving-kindness in these trying and difficult surroundings than in happier ones. It costs God more to give us pain. We need more love, and we get it. We should rejoice in it if our eyes were opened.

The loveless heart can detect nothing but disappointment and unkindness. But the heart that loves, and sings, and rejoices in the Lord, detects the evident tokens of God's love; just as the child of nature knows when friend or foe has passed through the forest-glade, by indications which would be unintelligible to our unpracticed eye. Echo always answers in the same key in which we address her!

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.

Psa. xxxiv. 18.

WHAT broke your heart? Unkindness? Desertion? Unfaithfulness on the part of those you trusted? Or did you attempt to do something which was beyond your power, and in the effort, the heartstrings snapped? A bird with a broken wing, an animal with a broken leg, a woman with a broken heart, a man with a broken purpose in his life—these seem to drop out of the main current of life into shadow. They go apart to suffer and droop. The busy rush of life goes on without them. But God draws nigh. The Great Lover of man is always at the best when the lights burn low and dim in the house of life. He always comes to us then. He shall sit as the Refiner.

Where do you see love perfected? Not between the father and his stalwart son who counts himself independent, or between the mother and the girl in whom love is awakening in its first faint blush: but where the crippled child of eleven years lies in the truckle-bed, pale and wan, unable to help herself. There the noblest fruits of love ripen and yield refreshment. The father draws nigh to the little sufferer, so soon as he gets home at night, and the mother is nigh all the time to sympathize and comfort and minister. So brokenness attracts God. It is dark; you think yourself deserted; but it is not so. God is there—He is nigh; call to Him—a whisper will bring a response.

“There, little one, don't cry;
They have broken your heart, I know;
And the rainbow gleams
Of your youthful dreams
Are things of the long ago;
But heaven holds all for which you sigh—
There, little one, don't cry.”

Them that are quiet in the land.

Psa. xxv. 20.

A SIGNIFICANT title for the saints, which has been adopted at least by one great religious body. In every age God has had His quiet ones. Retired from its noise and strife, withdrawn from its ambitions and jealousies, unshaken by its alarms; because they had entered into the secret of a life hidden in God. We must have an outlet for the energies of our nature. If we are unfamiliar with the hidden depths of eternal life, we shall necessarily live a busy, fussy, frothy, ambitious, eager life, in contact with men and things. But the man who is intense on the eternal, can be quiet in the temporal.

The man whose house is shallow, but one room in depth, cannot help living on the street. But directly we begin to dwell deep—deep in God, deep in the watch for the Master's advent, deep in considering the mysteries of the kingdom, we become quiet. We fill our little space; we get our daily bread and are content; we enjoy natural and simple pleasures; we do not strive, nor cry, nor cause our voice to be heard in the street; we pass through the world, with noiseless tread, dropping a blessing on all we meet; but we are no sooner recognized than we are gone.

Get quiet, beloved soul; tell out thy sorrow and complaint to God. Let not the greatest business or pressure divert thee from God. When men rage about thee, go and tell Jesus. When storms are high, hide thee in His secret place. When others compete for fame and applause, and their passion might infect thee, get into thy closet, and shut thy door, and quiet thyself as a weaned babe. For if thy voice is quiet to man, let it never cease to speak loudly and mightily for man in the ear of God. Oh to be a Quietist in the best sense!

In Thy light shall we see light.

Psa. xxxvi. 9.

THERE are many dark things around us in which we detect light only when we behold them in the light which streams from the face of Jesus. In His light we see light in them. Yonder lies a bit of charcoal, black and opaque; and even when it has been changed by chemistry to crystals, it is dull and dense, so long as it is in the dark. Who could guess that such depths and fountains of light exist in that insignificant atom? But let it be brought into the rays of the morning sun, and as it flashes and glistens, in that light we see its light; fountains of light welling up; caverns of light, where the elves and fairies of childish story hide.

So it is of the Bible.—Its pages seem devoid of help and comfort, till we open them under the light of Jesus. Cleopas and the other learned this on the road to Emmaus.

So it is of nature.—The Greek, lover of nature though he was, never saw in her face the loveliness which has been the theme of Christian poetry and art. In the light of Christ's parables and allusions we see light.

“Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen.
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
While I know, as now I know,
I am His, and He is mine.”

So it is of human love.—There is a new preciousness, tenderness, thoughtfulness, blessedness, where the love and light of Jesus reign in home and heart. We see a loveliness and beauty in our dear ones that had eluded us till we beheld them in the love of Jesus.

Delight thyself also in the Lord.

Psa. xxxvii. 4.

ONE of Tauler's hymns is a lovely specimen of how a man delights in the Lord. He takes a number of familiar instances of close affinity and interdependence, and applies them to the intimacy subsisting between him and his beloved Lord:—

“As the bridegroom to his chosen,
As the king unto his realm,
As the keep unto the castle,
As the pilot to the helm,
So, Lord, art Thou to me.”

But we cannot delight thus without effort. We must withdraw our eager desires from the things of earth, fastening and fixing them on Him. The current of our being must set toward God. We must cultivate the habit of holy intimacy with Him, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. We must accustom ourselves to hold up before us the successive attributes and works of God, till they strike our admiration, and elicit our homage.

Then we shall find rest unto our souls, because He will give us the desires of our hearts. When God Himself is our desire we shall be forever delivered from disappointment, because we can always have Him; we shall be removed from risk of penury and want, because we can have as much of Him as we need; we shall be beyond the fear of loss, because He changes not. They who want God possess Him. To long for God is to have that for which you long. To delight in God is to delight in One, of whom there is an infinity for every one, so that there need be no stint, no jealousy, no envy, no satiety. Every one can have as much as he can hold. “He giveth not His Spirit by measure,” that is, *by metre*. There is no gauge of our consumption!

Lord, all my desire is before Thee.

Psa. xxxviii. 9.

GOD knows our desires. We cannot always put them into words; we dare not trust them to the ears of our dearest, but they lie open to Him—the ideal we desire in our holiest moments; the thorn in the flesh from which we long to be delivered; the prayer for one who is dearer to us than life. “Lord, all my desire is before Thee.”

Think of the desires of the saints—for the realization of their ideals; for the salvation of men; for the glory of the Redeemer; for the Divine answer to the scoff, the sneer, the taunt of infidelity; for the coming of the King, the restoration of His ancient people, the setting up of the millennial reign.

“Lo, as some ship, outworn and overladen,
Strains for the harbor, where her sails are furled;
Lo, as some innocent and eager maiden
Leans o'er the wistful limit of the world:

“So even I, and with a pang more thrilling;
So even I, and with a hope more sweet,
Yearn for the sign, O Christ! of Thy fulfilling,
Faint for the flaming of Thine advent feet.”

And remember, He who implanted the desire does abundantly above all we ask or think. There is always a defect in every earthly joy, a something which shows itself for a moment to elude us.

“It blossoms just beyond the paths I follow,
It shines beyond the farthest stars I see;
It echoes faint from ocean caverns hollow,
And from the land of dreams it beckons me.”

But it never can be thus with any desire that God has taught us to cherish. Of these, as the ages pass, we shall say: It was a true report that I heard, but the half was not told. The desire which is directed to God cannot miss gratification.

I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner.

Psa. xxxix. 12.

SORROW and pain had taught the Psalmist some deep lessons touching the life of men around him—they seemed to be shadows pursuing shadows. They walked in a vain show, and were disquieted in vain. At their best estate, *i. e.*, when most firmly rooted, they were only a breath, curling from lip or nostril into the chill morning air, and then gone forever. The outward life and activity of man seemed to him as the shadow which darkens for a moment a whole mountain side, and, whilst you look, it has been chased away by the succeeding sheets of sunshine.

Amid all these vanities, the child of God is a pilgrim to the Unseen. He passes through Vanity Fair, with his eyes steadily fixed on the Eternal City, whose Builder and Maker is God. Abraham first described himself as a stranger and sojourner, when he stood up from before his dead, and craved a burying-place from the sons of Heth. All his children, those who inherit a like faith, must say the same. Faith cannot find a home on this side of the stars. It has caught a glimpse of the Infinite, and it can never be content with anything less.

But we are sojourners "with God." He is our constant companion. What Greatheart was to the women and feeble ones, God is to each of His saints. We may be strangers; but we are not solitary. We may be compelled to relax our grasp from the hands of beloved ones; but never alone—the Father is with us. Good company, safe escort, is it not? In the strength of it, we may obey without reluctance or fear the old motto—*Habita, ut migraturus*: Live as about to emigrate. "There is nothing greater than God; nothing less than I. He is rich. I am very poor, but I want for nothing."

I delight to do Thy will, O my God.

Psa. xl. 7, 8.

THE writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. x.) lays great stress on these words. He says that this yielding up of Christ's will to His Father's was consummated on the cross, and was the inner heart of our Saviour's passion. "By which will (surrendered and given back to God) we have been sanctified." He then proceeds to suggest that it is only as we enter into a living oneness with Jesus in this that we can pass from the outer court and have boldness to enter into the Holiest of all. This, he says, is the new and living way. Jesus entered into the Holiest because He gave Himself absolutely to His Father. We cannot expect to go thither till we have become possessed of the same spirit.

It is a solemn question for each. Have we all stood at the cross, as the slave of old at the door-post of his master's house, and said, "I love my Master. I will not go out free"? Have we been united to that cross, as by the boring of the awl? Have we so embraced the will of God that we are prepared to follow it, though it lead to the Cross and grave? Then one condition at least is fulfilled for our standing unabashed where angels veil their faces.

But there is yet another condition. We can have no right to stand within the Holiest, except through the blood of Jesus, shed for sin on the cross. This is necessary ere sinners can have boldness in the presence of Divine Purity.

When Rutherford was like to die of sore illness, instead of a martyr's death, he said, "I would think it a more glorious way of going home, to lay down my life for the cause at the cross of Edinburgh or St. Andrew's; but I *submit* to my Master's will. Oh for arms to embrace Him!"

Blessed is he that considereth the poor.

Psa. xli. 1.

THE realm of Blessedness is all around. It may be entered at any minute, and we may dwell in it all the days of our life. Our enjoyment of blessedness is totally undetermined by outward circumstances. If you stand in some great retail emporium and watch the faces of the women, you will be greatly instructed. Yonder sits a richly-dressed lady with society and fashion, dress and money at her command, but her manner and tone are utterly weary and dissatisfied; whilst across the counter a girl waits on her, whose thin face and simple attire tell their own story, but her expression and bearing betoken the possession of an inner calm and strength, an inexhaustible fund of patience and sweetness. Such contrasts meet us everywhere. The realm of blessedness dips down into humble and lowly lives on every side of us. Have we entered it?

Christ's beatitudes give us eight gates, any one of which will immediately conduct us within its confines. But here is another: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Even if you cannot help or relieve them to any appreciable extent, consider them; let them feel that you are thinking of and for them; do not hurry them when they recite their long, sad story; put them at their ease; treat them with Christian courtesy and consideration. Begin at once. There are plenty around you, who, if not poor in the things of this world, are poor in love and hope and the knowledge of God. Tell them of "the blessing of the Lord," which "maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." Silver and gold you may have none; but such as you have be sure and give. Learn to consider people. Try and look on things from their standpoint.

Deep calleth unto deep.

Psa. xlii. 7.

THERE are wonderful harmonies in nature. Voices call to one another across vast spaces. The depths below the firmament call to the heights above. The deep of the ocean calls to the deep of the azure sky. Listen, O my soul, to the mighty voices sounding ever through the universe of God.

The deep of Divine Redemption calls to the deep of human need.—It sometimes seems as though the opposite were true, and as though the cry originated in man; but it is not so. God is always first; and as He looks into hearts stricken and desperate, conscious of unfathomable yearnings, and infinite capacity, He calls aloud, and the depth of His heart appeals to the depth of the heart of man. Would that it might ever answer back!

The deep of Christ's wealth calls to the deep of the saint's poverty.—He looks down upon our attenuated and poverty-stricken experience with an infinite yearning. He cannot endure that we should go through life naked and miserable, poor and blind, when He has got gold, and precious stones, and white raiment. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider. Forsake thy father's house. Come unto Me, and receive from My fullness. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

The deep of the Holy Spirit's intercession calls to the deep of the Church's prayer.—He awakens in us groanings that cannot be uttered, and burdens us with the will of God.

Whatever depths there are in God, they appeal to corresponding depths in us. And whatever be the depths of our sorrow, desire, or necessity, there are correspondences in God from which full supplies may be obtained. Thou hast the pitcher of faith, and the well is deep.

O God, my God!

Psa. xliiii. 4.

WHAT a change within the soul one short hour spent in God's presence will prevail to make! The psalmist is opposed by an ungodly nation, and resisted by a deceitful and unjust man. He mourns because of the oppression of the enemy; he questions whether God has cast him off. Then led by those twin angels, Light and Truth, commissioned and sent forth for that purpose from the presence of God, he enters in thought and spirit within the precincts of the Divine Tabernacle, and stands before the Altar. Immediately the clouds break. Putting his puny hand upon the great God, he appropriates all He is and has, as though it were His own, and takes again, in a very ecstasy of realizing faith, his harp, too long silent, and breaks into rapturous melody.

Have you not sometimes groped in the dark, till those two angels have come to lead you also to the altar where the High Priest stands? Then what a change! Your circumstances have not altered, but you have conceived a new idea of what God can be to you. You have said, This God is my God forever and ever. You have said, O God, MY God! You have laid your hand on God's wealth and called it all your own. You have chided your soul for being disquieted and depressed whilst such a heritage is yours. You have spoken of God, first as the God of your strength; secondly, as the gladness of your joy; thirdly, as the health of your face.

“Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others—that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak and heartless be,
Anxious or troubled when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?”

Thou art my King, O God: command victories.

Psa. xlv. 4 (R. V., marg.).

BEFORE a man can say that God is his King, he must have very definitely consecrated himself to God. The relation of too many believers to Christ falls short of this supreme act of the soul; and in consequence their lives lack directness, power, victory over temptation. My reader, thou hast been sorely tried by overmastering temptations before which thy resolutions have been swept as children's sand-heaps by the tide. Wilt thou quietly consider whether from the very depth of thy being thou hast ever said to God, Thou art my King. The kingship of Jesus is always associated with victory; and just as soon as His supremacy is acknowledged, He will begin to command deliverance and victory.

Behold, thy King cometh to thee, having salvation. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in; but He is also the merciful Saviour. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. It is always Prince first. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, thou shalt be saved.

What a battle-shout this is! Whenever temptation is near; when the foe seems about to take the citadel by assault; when heart and flesh quail before the noise of battle—then to look up to the living Christ, and say, Thou *art* my King, O Son of God: command victory! There is no devil in hell but would flee before that cry of the tempted and tried believer; and God could not be neglectful of such an appeal. Jacob is only a worm; yet even he is more than a conqueror when God fights for him. It is thus that Jacob Behmen begins one of his letters: "May the Overcomer, Jesus Christ, through Himself, overcome in us all *His* enemies."

My work is for a king.

Psa. xlv. 1 (R. V., marg.).

THIS dignifies the meanest occupation. By this motive the apostles urged their converts to daily duty, slaves though they were in the houses of rich and godless owners. They were taught to look upon their lot as the will of God; and to do service as unto the Lord, and not unto men, seeking the praise of God as their sufficient reward.

As we take in hand the bits of carved work which once stood high in the cathedral roof, but now lie almost hidden by rank vegetation, and consider the exquisite carving, which the artists never thought would be so minutely inspected, we feel that each unknown craftsman did his work for the King. There is no doubt that the religious intention of their work elevated their meanest toils to the level of sacred service. Let us endeavor each day to realize that everything may be done for Jesus which may be done at all. Do you take food? It is that the body may be deft and quick to execute His purposes. Do you rest and seek recreation? It is that your energies may be recuperated, and that the tide of nervous power may return with fresh vigor. Do you manufacture, buy and sell, advise and preach? All may be inspired by the one purpose, that His will may be done, His kingdom come—which is righteousness, peace, and good-will to men.

Such a life, however, is only possible when the heart overflows, bubbles up and over, with goodly matter. The heart must always be in contact with the fervent love of Christ. It is only as the Divine heat passes into us that the affections will boil up and overflow in holy act. Let us make the things about the King before we speak them. Let us give time to muse, that the fire may burn.

He maketh wars to cease.

Psa. xlv. 9.

“MY soul is among lions, and I dwell among those that are set on fire: even the sons of men, whose words are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.” Such is the frequent confession of the child of God. Hemmed in by foes, the butt of vehement hate! But the moment comes at length when God arises to deliver. He utters His voice—the earth melts. In the night the enemy has wrapped up his tents and stolen silently away. War has ceased, and all the land of life lies plain and open.

God makes *the wars of the outward life* cease, so that as life's afternoon comes the man who had fought his way through overwhelming odds—as a reformer, or inventor, or philanthropist—spends his years amid troops of friends and loving recognition.

God makes *the wars of the home* cease, so that the disturbing elements pass out, or are transmuted by invincible patience and love.

God makes *the wars of the heart* cease, so that Satan no longer annoys. The storm dies down, and the river which makes glad the city of God purls quietly through the soul. Sennacherib and his vast array lie as the leaves of autumn, silent in the last sleep.

If as yet God has not made your wars to cease, it is because He knows that you have still strength to fight on. Do not faint in the day of battle. Ponder those great words of Cromwell: “Call not your burden sad or heavy, for if your Heavenly Father sent it (or permitted it) He intended it to be neither.” It is through the fight that you are winning experience, strength, the approval of your Captain, and the crown.

Ye shall choose our inheritance for us.

Psa. xlvii. 4.

“CHOOSE for us, our Father.” We say it deliberately. If He were to give us our choice at this moment, though there is no one of us that does not cherish a secret longing too deep for words, we would put it back into His hand and say, “Thou knowest better than words can tell Thee what lies closest to our soul, but we dare not take the opportunity of snatching at it; Thou wilt give it or its equivalent in the sweetest form and at the most opportune hour.” Would not this be the wisest attitude for any one of us to assume, believing, as we do, that our Father’s wisdom is only outshone by His love?

Wilt thou, O soul of man, standing at the foot of the Hill of God, ask thy Father to choose the track? He knows thy strength and powers of endurance; He knows also thy ardent yearning for the best. Subordinate thy choice to His in all things. Then, whatever the difficulties may prove to be, dare to believe that they are less than any that would have opposed thee hadst thou chosen the route for thyself. Never look back; never doubt thy Father’s personal interest; the clouds that sweep darkly over thy path may hide Him from thee, but not thee from Him.

And thou, who hast had much experience of God, wilt thou not still say, He shall choose? Thou canst not repent the trust which thou reposedst years ago in His selection. Thou wilt not withdraw thy confidence. Forevermore, whatever life may bring here or hereafter, we will cry, He shall choose, He shall choose. As Nicholas Herman said: “Pains and sufferings would be a paradise to me which I should suffer with my God; and the greatest pleasures hell, if I could relish them without Him.”

Traverse her palaces.

Psa. xlviii. 13 (R. V.).

THE pious Jew broke into exclamations as he considered the beloved city of his fathers. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. In proud confidence he challenged the world of men to walk about Zion, count her towers, and mark her bulwarks. Finally they were to traverse her palaces. But what Jerusalem was to the Jews, God's loving-kindness is to us, as we think of it, in the midst of His temple. Let us consider its beauty and joy, its strength and glory. "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!"

Traverse the rooms in the Palace of God's love—that council-chamber of the eternal foreknowledge where we were chosen in Christ; this suite of apartments, which began with the unrobing-room of Bethlehem, and ended with the golden stairway of Olivet; those mansions of the Homeland which He is preparing for them that love Him; the pavilion whither He will lead His bride where He comes to take her to Himself: then look onward to the new heaven and the new earth, where God shall spread His tabernacle over His people, and all our loftiest ideals will be realized forevermore.

Life is a traversing of the successive rooms of the Palace of Love. They are not alike: each has its own beauty; each leads to something better; in each God is All. Some seem to pass through the rooms veiled or blind; others miss seeing the King. But those who dare to look for Him everywhere, find Him. Always our Christ forever and ever; always our Guide even unto death, and beyond. Always the present opening to something better, as the rosebud to the rose; as the acorn to the oak; as the chrysalis to the butterfly.

Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil?

Psa. xlix. 5.

HAVE I not God? At sundry times and in divers manners, He spake to, and succored His saints. Will He not come to me, and cast around me the soft mantle of His protecting love? And if I love Him, do I need any beside?

“Who that one moment has the least descried Him,
Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
Pleasures and powers that are not, and that are?”

Did He not walk with Enoch, and then take him home, before the deluge came? Did He not shut Noah in, with His own hand, that there should be no jeopardy from the overflowing flood? Did He not assure Abram that He was his shield and exceeding great reward, quieting his fears against any possible combination of foes? Did He not preserve His servant Moses from the fury of Pharaoh and the murmurings of Israel? Was not Elijah hidden in the secret of His pavilion from the wrath of Ahab? Did He not send His angel to shut the lions' mouths that they might not hurt Daniel? Were not the coals of the burning fiery furnace as sweet and soft as forest glades to the feet of the three young confessors? Has God ever forsaken those that trusted Him? Has He ever given them over to the will of their enemies?

Wherefore, then, should *I* fear in the day of evil? I may be standing on the deck, whilst the ship is beset by icebergs and jagged splintered rocks; the fog drapes everything, as the way slowly opens through this archipelago of peril: but God is at the helm—why should I fear? Days of evil to others cannot be so to me, for the presence of God transmutes the evil to good.

Our God shall come.

Psa. l. 3.

THE years pass as snowflakes on the river; and as each drops into the mighty past, it cries, God will come! Each Advent season, with its cluster of services, herald-voices, reminiscences and anticipations, lifts the message clear above the turmoil and tumult of mankind, God will come! The disappointments of our fairest hopes, the overcasting of our sunrises, the failures of our politicians, statesmen, and counsellors, to effect a permanent and radical improvement of man's nature, all take up the word, Our God shall come!

“Surely He cometh, and a thousand voices
Call to the saints and to the deaf and dumb;
Surely He cometh, and the earth rejoices,
Glad in His coming, who hath sworn, I come.”

Dear heart, get thee often to thine oriel window, and look out for the breaking of the day. Did not the Master assure us that He would soon return? Harken, He saith again to-day, “Surely I come quickly.” The little while will soon be over, and He will come first to receive His saints to Himself, and afterward to come with them to the earth. Why are we disconsolate and dismayed? The perplexities of the Eastern problem, the gradual return of the Jews to Palestine, the despair and lawlessness of men, the unrest of nations, the preparedness on the part of the Church—like so many minute guns at night—keep the heart awake. Oh, let your eyes flash with the glow of thanksgiving! Be glad and strong, confident and calm. Let your loins be girded, and your lamps burning. Through heaven's spaces you shall detect the advent of your God; and when He comes He will break the silence of the ages with words of majesty and might.

Renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psa. li. 10 (R. V., marg.).

PERHAPS that is our chiefest need : especially so as we gird up our loins for a new stretch of pilgrimage. We do not need nobler ideals. They flash over our souls. We read of Browning kissing, on each anniversary of his wedding, the steps by which his bride went to the marriage altar ; and we vow to lift our wedded life higher. We read of Henry Martyn mourning that he had devoted too much time to public work, and too little to private communion with God ; and we vow to pray more. We recall the motto written on Green the historian's grave at Mentone, "He died learning" ; and we vow that each day shall see some lesson learned from the great store of Truth. We read those noble words of W. C. Burns, "Oh to have a martyr's heart, if not a martyr's crown" ; and we vow to give ourselves absolutely to witness and suffer for Jesus. But, alas ! our ideals fade within a few hours, and the withered petals are all that remain. We need the steadfast spirit.

But this God can give us by His Holy Spirit. He can renew our will from day to day, and infuse into us His own unaltering, unalterable purpose. He can make possible, obedience to the apostolic injunction, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Hear what comfortable words the Apostle Peter saith : "The God of all grace, who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall Himself restore, stablish, and settle you." Then we shall move resolutely and unflinchingly onward ; like Columbus, undaunted by discouragement, we shall cross unknown seas, till the scent of the land we seek is wafted across the brief intervening distance.

I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.

Psa. liii. 8.

IN its dress of evergreen, the olive is at all times a beautiful object. Many reasons demand that we should resemble it. There are three ways of becoming like a green olive tree, mentioned in this and the following verses:—

Trust in the mercy of God.—To trust when the light has burned to its socket in the house of life, and the heart is as lonely as Job's amid the wreck of his home. To believe that the mercy of God is not clear gone, nor His tender mercies have failed. To know that all is well, that seems most ill. This keeps the heart from withering.

Thanksgiving.—"I will give thee thanks forever." There is always something to thank God for. When some one condoled with the old slave woman, because she had only two teeth left, she replied, quickly, "But I thank Him, honey, all the time, that they are opposite each other." Find out with Paul something to be happy about, even when arraigned before a judge, on trial for your life. "I think myself happy, King Agrippa."

Waiting on God.—Not always talking to Him or about Him, but waiting before Him, till the stream runs clear; till the cream rises to the top; till the mists part, and the soul regains its equilibrium. This keeps the soul calm and still. The name of God is good, a wholesome theme for meditation, because it includes His nature. To meditate on it is soul-quieting and elevating. O troubled one, get away to some quiet spot and wait on God! Look away from the wind and waves to the face of Jesus. The Divine Name is written on those dear features; and heaven looks forth from those true, deep, tender eyes. The house of God is a safe and sheltered place for His olive-trees!

God bringeth back the captivity of His people.

Isa. liii. 6.

IT is wonderful to notice the many ways in which God brings us back to Himself. We may have been carried into captivity by a troop of anxieties or a horde of worries; by temptations like the sons of Anak; by pride and other evils, as when David found that the Amalekites had carried off his belongings into captivity. Then God comes to the rescue: sometimes by a drawing felt throughout the soul; sometimes by a little word dropped by another; sometimes by an incident from a biography. Any one of these acts upon us as the sunbeams on frost—there is a meeting and yielding, a desire to get alone, confession of waywardness and wandering, and earnest petitions for renewal of the blessed past. Thus God bringeth back the captivity of His people.

Are you a captive, pining in some distant bondage? It is not surprising that you hang your harp upon the willows, and weep as you remember Zion—how you went with the throng, and even led them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise. And as you contrast the past and the present, it is well that your soul is cast down. But when the Lord brings again your captivity, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

Would it not be well to look out for your brother Lot if he has been carried off down the long Jordan Plain? Should you not arm and go to his rescue, as Abraham did? Perhaps the Lord would turn your captivity, if you sought to turn the captivity of others; and Melchizedek would meet you with the bread and wine.

“O my God!

Draw me still nearer, closer unto Thee,
Till all the hollow of these deep desires
May with Thyself be filled!”

Save me, O God, by Thy Name. . . . He hath delivered me out of all trouble. Psa. liv. 1, 7.

THERE are only seven stanzas in this psalm. It is one of the briefer of David's compositions. Written when the Ziphites told of David's hiding-place and compelled him to shift his quarters, perhaps its brevity attests some hasty moment snatched from the hurry and bustle of the necessary flight. It is said that Mr. Gladstone made his memorable Latin version of "Rock of Ages" during an interval of a House of Commons debate. It is worthy of remark that, however hurried David might have been, and however great the responsibility resting upon him, he found time to turn to God for help. He had learned the secret of abiding in the Divine Presence.

It is said of one, "He was so accustomed to the Divine Presence that he received from it continual succor upon all occasions. It was his continual care to be always with God, and to do nothing, say nothing, which should endanger the perpetual intercourse." But obviously, this frame of mind depended on a previous dedication of himself as a freewill offering to God. There must be no division of interests, if God is to be all. You must consider yourself as a stone before a carver, whereof he is to make a statue—presenting yourself before Him that He may make His perfect image in you and do as He will with your life. You must realize that He has permitted this interruption of your peace, this intrusion of Ziphite hate. You must look beyond the hand that smites, to the Father who permits. Then the soul will rock itself to rest; and before you have been five minutes with God you will be able to say as David, "He hath delivered me." Be of good cheer; rest on His Name; He will deliver you out of *all* trouble.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord.

Psa. lv. 22.

WE all know the story of the man wearily trudging along the road with the burden on his back, to whom a friend offered a lift in his cart. To the latter's surprise the wayfarer sat beside him with his burden still strapped to his shoulder. "Why do you not put your burden down?" quoth he. "Thank you," was the reply, "I am so obliged at your carrying me that I will not trouble you with my burden also." And so he hugged it still. How many a child of God trusts Him with his soul, but not with his load! Yet if God has undertaken the greater, surely He may be trusted with the less. If He has borne thy sins, He can surely carry thy sorrows.

Thy burden, as the margin suggests, is "that which He hath given thee." Whatever it be—the weight of a church, the pressure of a family, the burden of other souls—thy Father hath given it thee. Give its pressure back to Him, whilst thou retainest the salutary lesson of hourly patience and faith. God imposes burdens, to see what we will do with them. We may carry them to our undoing, or we may cast them on Him for His blessed countenance.

"Oh for the faith to cast our load,
E'en while we pray, upon our God,
Then rise with lightened cheer."

Notice, that if we cast our burden, we must believe He takes it. We must definitely leave it with Him, and count as a positive sin the temptation to reconsider it. When you cast your burden, God will take it, and will do more. He will sustain *you*. He will catch up your burden and you, and bear you all the day long between His shoulders.

Thou hast delivered: . . . wilt not Thou deliver?

Psa. lvi. 13.

IT has been a wonderful deliverance! The blood and righteousness of Christ have satisfied the demands of a holy law. Into our souls, dead in trespasses and sins, He has poured the power of an endless life. The very life of God Himself has become resident within us, through the grace of the one Man, Christ Jesus. We cannot be hurt by the second death. We have eaten of the flesh, and drunk of the blood of the Son of Man, and ours is the everlasting life. Death and the grave forever behind us, whilst before is the city, whose streets are never shadowed by death or crying.

And will not God finish what He has begun? Has He given us life, and will He not give us all that is necessary for right and holy living? Does not the one necessarily involve the other, as the gift of the body involves the bestowment of food and clothing? Have we been saved by Christ's death? Shall we not also be saved by His life? Will it not be for the glory of God that we should walk worthy of the high calling? Trust Him, child of God, whatever the traps and pitfalls, whatever the slipperiness and difficulty of keeping a foothold; believe that He is able to keep you from stumbling, and that His ability is only exceeded by His love. Let your Guide bind you by a strong rope to Himself as you start each morning in His company.

The answer to these reasonings, the fulfillment of our hopes, comes back to us from a verse in Rom. v., as rendered by combining the suggestions of Dr. Moule, and of Conybeare and Howson, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being already reconciled, we shall be kept safe by sharing in His life."

God performeth all things for me.

Psa. lvii. 2.

IT seemed to David that he was condemned to spend his days in a lion's den; on every side were blasphemy and reproach; his enemies breathed out flames, and their slanders cut like swords. But amid it all he steadily looked away to God, the Most High, who from His elevation would reach down to deliver, and would surely accomplish all that was necessary. It is a marvellous thing to consider that God is literally willing to perform *all* things in us, and for us, if only we will let Him. The mischief is that most of us insist on performing all things in the energy of our own resolve, in the strength of our own power. We shut God out of our life: and whilst He is coming to our help, we have forced ourselves, and offered the sacrifice to our own hurt.

Before, therefore, God will perform all things for us, as He did for His servant, we must learn, like him, to wait in His presence that He may teach us our absolute poverty and helplessness; that He may assure us of our need of absolute and unceasing dependence: that He may open our eyes to see the well-spring which Hagar saw on the desert sand. The fixed heart (ver. 7), fixed only upon God, set upon waiting His time, receiving His help, and doing all things according to the inspiration and energy of His Spirit, is absolutely essential.

Awake the dawn, O child of God (8). Give thanks to God: sing His praises (9): let thy aspiration be for His exaltation (5, 11): let thy heart be fixed in its resolve to take deliverance from none other—and He will send forth His twin-angels, Mercy and Truth (3). They will come, even into the lion's den, and save thee from those who would swallow thee up (4).

Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Psa. lviii. 11 (R. V.).

THIS is one of the imprecatory psalms, and some are seriously disturbed with what seems an unforgiving spirit on the part of the psalmist. We must remember, however, that he was brought up in a severer school than ours. The cliffs of Sinai are sterner than the undulations of the mountain of Beatitudes. He was impressed more by the righteousness and less by the love of God than we are. The true key to the solution of the difficulty which these words suggest is in the words quoted above, which show His zeal for the character of Jehovah.

We must remember that the great conflict of His time was—why the wicked were permitted to flourish. Their success seemed to suggest that God was indifferent to sin. The book of Job is filled with controversy on the same theme: its chapters are filled with reasonings how God could be just, and allow the wicked to prosper, whilst the righteous suffered sore affliction. The psalmist, therefore, pleads that the wicked should be taken away with a whirlwind, that men may be compelled to admit that there is a God that judgeth. Let wicked men be put to shame and punished, then surely men will seek after righteousness because of the immunity it secures and the blessedness it offers.

Yes, child of God, there is a reward for thee. It is not in vain that thou hast washed thy hands in innocency. But it will not come in the coinage or honor of this age, else it would be evanescent and perishable. God is already giving thee of the eternal and divine—peace, joy, blessedness; and one day thou shalt be fully vindicated.

“Perhaps the cup was broken here
That Heaven’s new wine might show more clear.”

*O my Strength, I will wait upon Thee. Unto
Thee will I sing praises.* *Psa. lix. 9, 17.*

IN the R. V. this contrast comes out in exquisite beauty. First, the soul waits upon God, its strength; and then to Him who had been its strength, it breaks into praise.

Notice the circumstances in which this psalm was composed. Around the house lurk Saul's emissaries, gathering themselves together against him. At any moment they threaten to break in and murder him upon the psalmist's bed. Michal and he are reduced to their last straits, yet the hunted man finds opportunity to wait upon God. It is not that he asks for aught as a definite gift; but he waits on God Himself, still expectant, eager. There are times when we cannot tell God what He should do; we can only hush our soul, as a mother her babe, and wait patiently until He tells us what He has prepared.

Meditate on these three attributes. He is the God of your mercy, the Fountain from which pure mercy flows, and nothing but mercy; He is your High Tower, whom you may put between yourself and Saul's hate; He is your Strength, not that you receive strength from Him, but that you appropriate Him as your strength. Stay thus musing and resting, until in that very house, pent in and besieged, you shall break into song, singing of God's strength, singing aloud of His mercy in the morning.

There are many beleaguered souls in the world, who have learned to put God between themselves and their besiegers, and to sing to Him.

“For the glory and the passion of this midnight
I praise Thy Name, I give Thee thanks, O Christ!
Thou hast neither failed me nor forsaken
Through these hard hours with victory overpriced;
Now that I too of Thy passion have partaken,
For the world's sake, called—elected—sacrificed.”

Oh, restore us again!

Psa. lx. 1 (R. V.).

CAST off! There is a sense in which that can never be. God will not cast off from salvation any soul of man that has sheltered under the covert of His Almighty wings. He may withdraw the sensible enjoyment and realization of His presence; but He cannot cast off forever, in the sense of consigning any fugitive to his foes or to the fate he dreads.

And yet there is a sense in which we are cast off, when we have been unbelieving and disobedient. Allowed to take our own way, that we may learn its bitterness; permitted to hunger and thirst, that we may know how evil a thing it is to seek our supreme good anywhere else than in God; given over to the tender mercies of the gods we have chosen, that we may be taught their helplessness. It was thus that God cast off His people. He showed them hard things, and allowed them to reap as they had sown.

But now they cry for restoration. Put us back, they say, into the old place; be to us what Thou wert, and make us to Thee as we were. Restore us again. He did it for Peter, putting him back to the front place in the Apostolic band; for Mark, allowing him, who had gone back in his first missionary journey, to write a Gospel; for Cranmer and many more, who in the first burst of fiery trial shrank back, but to whom He gave more grace. Believe in the restoring grace of Christ, who not only forgives, but puts back the penitent and believing soul where it was before it fell away. Indeed, it has been suggested that the prodigal fares better on his return than those who do not go astray. It is not really so. But there is much music and song when the lost is found and the dead lives.

Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.

Psa. lxi. 2.

DAVID is in the wilderness, fleeing from Absalom. It seems to him that he is at the end of the earth. "Love and Longing are potent magnifiers of space." His soul seems wrapped in gloom; then, from afar, he sees the Rock of his salvation, and asks to be led thither, and set thereon.

Can you not see that rock? All the desert is baking like a furnace. The very pebbles burn the hand like cinders. Nothing can abide the scorching glare but the little green lizards that dart to and fro among the stones. Sunbeams strike like swords on the head of the luckless travellers that dare to brave their glittering edge. But yonder there is a rock, rising high above the shimmering sands, and casting a deep black shadow on one side. Little lichens hide in its crevices, streaks of vegetation are enamelled on its steep surfaces, and at its foot there are even a few rock-plants growing as best they can in the arid soil. That is the higher rock—the rock higher than the traveller's stature. He makes for it; or if he is too faint and overwhelmed, he is led to it, and beneath its gracious shadow finds instant respite and repose. The shadow of a great rock in a weary land!

Jesus will be all this to thee, dear heart. Thou hast got to the end of the earth and of thyself; call out to Christ, and He will bring thee, faint and ready to die, to Himself as the Shadow from the heat. The Man of men can be this for thee, because He is higher than thou art. Higher than I, because of His Divine origin; higher, because of His perfect obedience; higher, because of His supreme sufferings; higher, because of His ascension to the right hand of power. Yet His side is scarred and cleft.

My soul waiteth only upon God.

Psa. lxii. 1 (R. V.).

DR. KAY gives as the literal translation : " Only toward God my soul is in silence " ; or, " Only for God waits my soul all hushed. " The noises of contending desires, the whispers of earthly hopes, are hushed : and the soul listens.

This is the test of true waiting. Wait before God till the voices, suggestions, and energies of nature become silent. Then only can God realize His uttermost of salvation. This was the secret of Abraham's long trial. He was left waiting till nature was spent, till all expedients proving abortive were surrendered ; till all that knew him pitied him for clinging to an impossible dream. But as this great silence fell on him, the evidence of utter helplessness and despair, there arose within his soul an ever-accumulating faith in the power of God ; and there was no obstacle to prevent God realizing all, and beyond all, because all the glory accrued to Himself.

This is why God keeps you waiting. All that is of self and nature must be silenced ; one voice after another cease to boast ; one light after another be put out ; until the soul is shut up to God alone. This process prevails equally in respect to salvation from penalty, deliverance from the power of sin, and our efforts to win souls. O my soul, be silent ! Hush thee ! Wait thou only upon God ! Surrender thy cherished plans and reliances. Only when death has done its perfect work, will He bestow the power of an endless (an indissoluble) life.

" O Lord, my God, do Thou Thy holy will !
I will lie still !
I will not stir, lest I forsake Thine arm,
And break the charm,
Which lulls me, clinging to my Father's breast
In perfect rest."

THIS is a marvellous saying. Literally rendered, the words are, "cleaves after Thee"—contact and eager pursuit. The metaphor which underlies it is obviously borrowed from the psalmist's familiarity with the wilderness. It is a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: one says that he knows of a secret spring, whose waters are clear and cool, and offers to lead the thirsty one to its margin, lined with mosses and grasses. Instantly the soul starts in pursuit, and follows hard on the footsteps of the pioneer.

So when we are athirst for God, He comes, and, in the person of Jesus, leads us to Himself. He is Guide and Guerdon, Prompter of the impulse, and Promoter of its satisfaction. He excites the desire, offers to show us its sufficient supply, and finally brings us to His own loving-kindness, which is better than life. It becomes us, then, to follow hard after Him. Let us do as Jonathan's armor-bearer, to whom the young prince said, Come up after me. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and feet, and his armor-bearer after him, and the Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer slew after him.

Follow hard after Christ, over hedge and ditch, through stubble and gorse, across dyke and brook, sometimes down the steep fall into the hollow, and again breasting the mountain slope, in the teeth of the pitiless blast. He has left an example that we should follow His steps. The scent lies lightly; catch it ere it fade. What though the fresh blood marks the track—follow hard! Follow on to apprehend that for which thou wast apprehended. Press toward the mark. Let there be no needless space between the Master and thee.

The righteous shall be glad in the Lord.

Psa. lxiv. 10.

ARE you glad in your Christian life? Gladness is the perquisite of children and childlike hearts, and there is nothing which is more distinctively characteristic of the work of grace in the heart than Christian gladness. The world may simulate it, but it is conscious of its dreary failure. Often faded worldlings will come to the true Christian, saying, What is the secret of your perennial gladness?

The glad heart is conscious of the love of God; knows that it is reconciled through the blood of the cross; realizes that there is nothing between itself and the light of the Father's smile; is conscious of rectitude in intention and tenderness of yearning love and pity. In every difficult circumstance it recognizes the Father's appointment; in every archipelago of rocks it is aware of the presence of God aboard the vessel, holding the helm and keeping the keel in the deepest current.

O souls, get right with God! avail yourselves of the perfect righteousness of Christ; watch that there be nothing between you and Him; walk in the light as He is in the light; cultivate the habit of considering what has been given rather than what has been withheld—and you will find that He will make you glad in proportion to the days in which He has afflicted you, and the years in which you have seen evil. The sad heart tires in a mile. The glad one mounts up with wings as eagles. After his vision Jacob "lifted up his feet, and came to the land of the children of the East" (Gen. xxix. 1, R. V.).

"Oh for the joy Thy presence gives—
What peace shall reign when Thou art here!
Thy presence makes this den of thieves
A calm, delightful house of prayer."

*Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and
causest to approach unto Thee. Psa. lxx. 4.*

I WOULD be one of those favored ones, my Saviour. There is nothing that the heart can conceive, which is to be compared with this blessedness. The light of nature, the joy of friendship, the fascination of art and books, can give no such delight as this approach unto Thee, this dwelling in Thy courts. But the longer I know myself, the surer I am that Thou must *cause* me to approach, that *Thou* must put forth extraordinary means for making me *dwell*. So cause me to approach that I may dwell.

When thy soul has put up such a prayer as this, be sure that an answer will come. Thou mayest be brought nigh by an invisible but all-penetrating attraction, as when the sun draws the earth, or the magnet the needle: or perhaps God will answer thee by terrible things in righteousness. There will be deep humiliations, solemn heart-searchings, sharp crucifixions, cherished purposes thwarted, the keenest pain, the most searching fire. But through all, there will come a growing tenderness and desire.

It was said by the late Mr. Spurgeon that he was not conscious of spending a quarter of an hour of his waking moments without a distinct recognition of the presence of God. And this will be true of us if we will trust the great High Priest to bring us within the vail, and keep us there. He entered that we may enter. He abides that we may abide. He stands in the Holiest that He may cause us to have a place of access among those that stand before the face of God. The anointing which we receive from Him will teach us how to abide. This may well be adopted as a life-prayer: "Cause me to approach, that I may dwell in Thy presence."

Thou, O God, hast proved us ; Thou hast tried us as silver is tried.
Psa. lxxvi. 10.

SILVER is tried by fire, and the heart by pain. "We went through fire." But in the fire thou shalt not be burned ; only thy dross shall be removed. The smell of burning shall not pass upon thee, for the form of the Son of God shall be at thy side.

"Be still, and He shall mould thee for His heritage of rest ;
The vessel must be shapen for the joys of Paradise.
And if the great Refiner in furnaces of pain
Would do His work more truly, count all His dealings gain."

The main end of our life is not to *do*, but to *become*. For this we are being moulded and disciplined each hour. You cannot understand why year after year the stern ordeal is perpetuated ; you think the time is wasted ; you are doing nothing. Yes, but you are situated in the set of circumstances that gives you the best opportunity for manifesting, and therefore acquiring, the qualities in which your character is naturally deficient. And the Refiner *sits* patiently beside the crucible, intent on the process, tempering the heat, and eager that the scum should pass off, and His own face become perfectly reflected in the surface.

Only be satisfied, with Archbishop Leighton, that nothing can befall thee but what has first passed concerning thee in the courts of heaven. And say with the saintly Fletcher : "I felt the will of my God like unto a soft pillow, upon which I could lie down and find rest and safety in all circumstances. Oh, it is a blessed thing to sink into the will of God in all things. Absolute resignation to the Divine will baffles a thousand temptations ; confidence in our Saviour carries us sweetly through a thousand trials."

God shall bless us ; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

Psa. lxxvii. 7.

THIS psalm is full of yearnings for the salvation of mankind. The selfish desire for the exclusive blessing of the chosen people is lost sight of in the catholic yearning that all the earth should fear Jehovah. Indeed, this is the ground on which the psalmist rests his personal claim for the Divine blessing. It is as though he said, "We only ask for gifts of grace, that through us they may be transmitted to all mankind." Turn us again, O God, that times of refreshing may come from Thy presence to all men ; our one desire is that the peoples may praise Thee.

We are reminded of those noble words of Andrew Fuller, to whom the initiation of modern missions to the heathen is so largely due : "We met and prayed for the heathen. We were drawn out of ourselves. God blessed us while we tried to be a blessing. Our hearts were enlarged, and we were baptized into a deeper sympathy with the soul-saving purposes of the Redeemer."

Are we infected with this noble passion ? Do we echo from our hearts the repeated prayer of this psalm : "Let all the peoples praise Thee" ? Do we ask for blessing from our own God, that we may be able to be a greater blessing to others ? It is because God is "our own God," that we are so anxious to make Him known. Oh that we might be carried out to sea on the tide of God's purposes, and yearnings, and pity ; and long as the psalmist did that his saving health might be known among all nations !

"Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest,
Cannot confound, nor doubt Him, nor deny ;
Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."

Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden.

Psa. lxxviii. 19 (R. V.).

NEVER tired or out of patience, that mighty God, of whose advent the psalmist is so full, daily bends beneath our burdens, and sets Himself to help us through crushing difficulties. They are unbearable to us, but to Him only a very little thing. If He taketh up the isles as a very little thing, surely your heaviest burden must be less.

But our mistake is that we do not realize that God is bearing our burdens. We think that we must cope with them; we let ourselves worry, as though we were the loneliest, most deserted, most pitiable beings in existence, when all the while God is going beside, ready to bear our burdens. The burden of our sins; of our anxieties about ourselves, and about others; of our frailties and infirmities; the responsibility of keeping us; the pressure of our daily need—all these rest daily on our God.

“’Tis enough that He should care;
Why should we the burden bear!”

Oh, do not carry your burdens for a single moment longer; pass them over to Him who has already taken your eternal interests to His heart. Only be patient, and wait on Him, and do not run to and fro seeking for help from man, or making men your consolers and confidants. Those who do this have their reward. But as for you, anoint your head and wash your face, so as not to excite the pity of others. “Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He will sustain thee.” But, when it has been cast, leave it with Him. Refuse to yield to anxious suggestions, and forthwith burst out into a song of thankful confidence. Bless Him! Praise Him! Be glad, and rejoice! When the heart is lightened of its load, it will soar.

*Save me, O God: for the waters are come in
unto my soul.*

Psa. lxix. 1.

MATTERS sometimes become desperate. For days the waters have been out on the low-lying lands, and slowly rising against the embankment, in the shelter of which some house is situated. Now, however, they have undermined and swept it away. With a crash it has fallen into the yellow foaming waters. A moment's agitation, and then not a trace of it. There is nothing now to keep back the flood, and it comes into the home, rising stealthily up the walls. In the life of the soul such a crisis comes not unfrequently. You have dreaded something, and the cold chill of fear has cast a shudder over you; but surely it could never come to *you*! There is that protection, that barrier, of position, money, wealthy friends. But one by one these are swept aside, and the waters come ever nearer, till there is nothing between them and the soul. They come in unto the soul.

It is well for a man to be able then to turn to God with the "Save me" of the psalmist. God must have the entire trust of our soul. He takes away all that lies between Him and us, that we may hang on Him, and lie naked and open to Him in our utter helplessness. From the midst of your sorrows, from the deep sin in which you are sinking, from the deep waters that overflow you, cry to God. He knows your foolishness; your sins are not hid from Him. He will stretch out His right hand and catch you, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Then our crying and tears will be turned to joyous shouts. We shall praise the name of God with a song, and magnify Him with thanksgiving; for the Lord heareth the needy, and despiseth not His prisoners (30, 33).

Make haste unto me, O God!

Psa. lxx. 5.

“MAKE haste!” Our frail patience gives out full often. We think that God is never coming. So many days I have waited for Thee, and as yet there has not been one symptom of Thine approach. Why are Thy chariots so tardy? Lazarus is dying; a few hours more, and life will have ebbed away. Provisions are failing and water is scarce, and still the enemy is entrenched in proud security. The world scoffs; but Thou comest not down the mountain slope, bringing salvation. Where is the Pentecost of which Thou speakest? Where Thy Second Advent?

But God is making haste. On the wings of every hour, quicker than light leaps from world to world, He is on His way. Delays are not denials, but are necessary to the perfecting of His arrangements. “Lo, I come quickly!” is still true, though nineteen hundred years have passed.

We do not wish the destruction of our enemies, but their salvation. We long that God should be magnified, and souls saved. We yearn for the setting up of the Kingdom of God, which is peace on earth, and blessing. And for this end we desire that God should accelerate His coming. O God, make no tarrying! Thine enemies boast themselves; our spirits faint for fear; men are sinking into perdition. Make haste!

Thy God will not be a moment overdue. When the fourth watch breaks, He will interpose. Not too soon for education; not too late for deliverance. But dare to believe that He is never absent. He is near thee all the while, bending over thee and all men, with tender pity, only waiting till He can see, with infallible wisdom, the best instant to interfere.

Thou, which hast showed me many and sore troubles, shall quicken me again. Psa. lxxi. 20(R.V.).

GOD shows us the troubles. We stand beside Him, and the mighty billows break around, but are shivered into myriads of drops. As we ride beside Him in the chariot of salvation, He points out to us the forms of dreaded evils, the ravines, the glaciers, the awful steeps; but it is as though we were cradled in some soft golden cloud which fringes the edge of the precipice, and glides along splintered cliffs where the chamois could not find footing. Look at this, saith our Guide. These are the troubles that overwhelm souls, and drain their life! Behold them, but thou shalt not suffer them! I show you them that you may know how to comfort and help those who have been overwhelmed. Sometimes, as this part of our education is being carried forward, we have to descend into "the lower parts of the earth," pass through subterranean passages, lie buried amongst the dead. But never for a moment is the cord of fellowship and union between God and us strained to breaking; and from the depths God will bring us up again.

Never doubt God. Never say that He has forsaken or forgotten. Never think that He is unsympathetic. He will quicken again. There is always a smooth piece in every skein, however tangled. The longest day at last rings out the evensong. The winter snow lies long, but it goes at last. Be steadfast; your labor is not in vain. God turns again, and comforts. And when He does, the heart which had forgotten its psalmody breaks out in jubilant song, as does the psalmist's.

"I will thank Thee with the lyre, even Thy truth, my God;

I will harp unto Thee with the harp, Thou Holy One of Israel;

My lips shall sing aloud when I harp unto Thee,
And my soul which Thou hast redeemed."

Like rain upon the mown grass.

Psa. lxxii. 6.

AMOS speaks of the king's mowings. Our King has many scythes, and is perpetually mowing His lawns. The musical tinkle of the whetstone on the scythe portends the cutting down of myriads of green blades, daisies, and other flowers. Beautiful as they were in the morning, within an hour or two they lie in long, faded rows. Thus in human life we make a brave show, which passes away like the beauty of grass, before the scythe of pain, the shears of disappointment, the sickle of death.

There is no method of obtaining a velvety lawn but by repeated mowings; and there is no way of getting tenderness, evenness, sympathy, but by the passing of God's scythes. How constantly the Word of God compares man to grass, and His glory to its flower! But when grass is mown, and all the tender shoots are bleeding, and desolation reigns where flowers were bursting, it is the most acceptable time for showers of rain falling soft and warm.

O soul, thou hast been mown. Time after time the King has come to thee with His sharp scythe. Thou hast sadly learned that all flesh is grass, and that the efforts of thy self-life are vain. Where are the king-cups and butter-cups of thy pride? They are laid low that thou shouldest bear better crops than ever; and that thou mayest do so, lo, He comes down as spring rain! He comes *down*; thus you have the miracle of His condescension. He comes down *like rain*; there you have the manner of His gentle advent. He comes *on the mown grass*; there is His expectancy, showing that His reason in mowing, followed as it is by the gentle raindrops, lies in the direction of new beauty and use. Do not dread the scythe—it is sure to be followed by the shower.

Only good is God to such as are pure in heart.

Psa. lxxiii. 1 (R. V., marg.).

GOD is only good. Such is the better rendering of the original. He makes "all things work together for good to them that love Him." However unlike goodness something in your lot may be, turn from the suggestions of sense to the affirmations of faith, and dare to say,

"His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light."

Nothing so glorifies God as when a Cowper, rescued from the border of despair, snatched from committing suicide, dares still to cling to his belief in the goodness of God.

Our faith is sometimes assailed, as Asaph's was, by the anomalies we meet with in the world. The wicked prosper, whilst the waters of a full cup are wrung out to the people of God. The scribes and Pharisees greedily devour widows' houses, and prey on the helpless; whilst earnest merit seeks for work and recognition in vain. It is a strange world, full of contradictions, perplexities, and insoluble questions; but through it all God's children must dare to affirm that He is only good. You do not feel it? Nevertheless, reason, Scripture, experience, demand that you should assert it. The fact is, we have lost the standpoint of vision. The psalmist found these things too painful till he went into the sanctuary of God, and then he understood. Do not take earth as the centre of the universe, but the sun. Do not look at God from circumstances, but at circumstances from God. Live continually with Him: then will mystery become unravelled, and dark problems solved. Above all, be pure in heart, free from the stain of sense, with one purpose. Thou shalt see the soul of good in what seems evil.

Have respect unto the covenant.

Psa. lxxiv. 20.

WHAT a marvellous ejaculation! Here is a broken heart, pouring out its wail into the ear of God about His sanctuary and city. His adversaries have broken into the sacred precincts, and have hewn down its exquisitely carved work with hammer and hatchet. They were as men who lift up the hatchet against a forest of trees. There is nothing more utterly sad than the lament, "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet; neither is there any among us that knoweth how long."

But from it all the suppliant rises to a climax of insistent appeal, and bids God have respect unto the covenant, made centuries before with Abraham and his seed. This was an appeal which struck right home to the heart of God. He could not deny Himself.

Here is an attitude in prayer, which can only be taken when the soul has become intimate with God, and come to close grip with Him. When every other reason has been marshalled, and every argument alleged; when still the answer tarries, and the case is desperate, then turn to God, and say, "Thou canst not run back from the terms of the covenant to which Thou hast pledged Thyself. This is included in the bond of agreement. I claim that Thou shouldst do as Thou hast said."

The covenant is set out at length in Heb. viii. It will cover all the exigencies of our lives. And by Gal. iii. 14 we may also place ourselves under the provision of the threefold covenant which God ratified with Abraham. In every trial, when desiring any blessing, when the crashing blows of the adversaries' hatchet are heard, turn to God, and say, "Have respect unto the covenant, of which Jesus is the Mediator and His blood the seal."

He lifteth up.

Psa. lxxv. 7.

THIS is the psalm of uplifts. Against the uplifts of the wicked, described in the fourth verse, the psalmist contrasts the uplifts of God. They come neither from east nor west, but from above. God is the supreme arbiter of human destiny. The horns of the wicked are cut off, and those of the righteous are lifted up, by the interpositions of His Providence: for God is judge.

Are you depressed to-day? Look up to Him, and ask that you may be uplifted into fellowship with the risen glorified Lord. The Ascension of our Lord is the measure and example of our own. Are you lying among the pots? Seek for the wings of the dove, that with flitting pinion you may make your way to the Ark, where the hand awaits to take you in. Have you been in the valley of the shadow of death? Claim that the mighty power which wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead, and made Him sit in the heavenlies far above all power and principality, may do as much for you.

This is also true in a temporal sense. Promotions in any direction, to positions of credit, influence, or consideration, are the gift and work of God. To be lifted up to a chief place in His Church, to the stewardship of large wealth, to the exercise of commanding influence, is due to the Divine interposition. You do not hold it at the caprice of man, but as the direct bestowment of your Father. Do not fear to lose it because you are true to Him. He expects you to be true to Him. He has put you where you are for no other purpose than that you should realize His purposes among men. "A man can receive nothing, except it have been given him from heaven." But if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory?

Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee : the residue shalt Thou restrain.

Psa. lxxvi. 10 (R. v., marg.).

FROM this review of the fate of the foes of Israel, the psalmist comes to this conclusion. He has seen the serried hosts of Sennacherib come up against the city of God, but the warriors have slept their sleep: it was as though the Almighty had snapped the instruments of war across His knee. The wrath of man had been allowed up to a certain point, to bring into clear evidence the greater power of God; and then He had quietly put a term to its further manifestation.

Pharaoh's wrath against Israel only served to make God's mighty arm conspicuous. So with Herod, who took Peter to behead him; and with the high priests who fumed against the early Church. So shall it be with the arch-enemy of all. Christ is mightier than he is. All he has done has acted as a foil to our Lord's glorious majesty. What he has wrought against man has only brought out more of the grace and the love of God. So shall it be to the end, when there shall be an eternal limit put to his hellish deeds, for he shall be bound by a great chain and cast into the bottomless pit.

Ah, tried soul, what is permitted to happen in your life will tend ultimately and eternally to the praise and glory of God, if only you will abide in Him, and suffer bravely, nobly, in the grace of Christ. And there always will be a restraint. There will always be a "thus far and no farther." God's faithfulness will not let us be tempted above that we are able. When the lesson is learned, and the opportunity for the revelation of God is complete, and the tried soul is proved to have won as its reward the crown of life, then God will stay the enemy and avenger, and give spoils more glorious than mountains of prey.

*Thy way is in the sea. . . . Thou leddest Thy
people like a flock.* *Psa. lxxvii. 19, 20.*

THIS is almost the climax of sublimity, because of the contrast of the majesty and gentleness of God. In the first of these verses you have the former. God is described as wading through mighty oceans as a man might ford some tiny stream. The Atlantic with fathomless depths is no more to Him than a brook to us—not so much. But as the brook hides the footmarks which are imprinted on its soft ooze, so are God's footprints hidden. We cannot detect His great and wonderful secrets. We are unable to gauge His reasons. He marches through the ages with steps we cannot track. For His orbit there is no standard of computation.

But dread Him not. This mighty God has the tender heart of a shepherd. He leads His people like a flock; not overdriving, but carrying the lambs in His bosom, and gently leading those that are with young. Mightier than the mightiest, but meeker than the meekest! The Lion of Judah, but the Lamb of Bethlehem! Prince and Saviour; Fellow of Jehovah; and yet the smitten Shepherd of the scattered flock!

Nor is this all. It is a human hand that leads the flock. God does His work through the hands of human and fallible agents. You have not recognized Him; but had your eyes been opened, you would have seen His leading in the gentle hand of that mother, in the strong grasp of that friend, in the trembling fingers of that young girl, in the tiny hand of your little babe. Ah, how many good and tender hands have moulded and fashioned our lives!—but beneath them all there have been the leadings of the great God, convoying us through deep and dark waters to our fold.

Can God?

*Psa. lxxviii. 19. **

OH, fatal question! It shut Israel out of the Land of Promise, and it will do as much for you. Israel had seen the wonderful works of God, cleaving the sea, lighting the night, and giving water from rocks. Yet they questioned God's ability to give bread, and to spread a table in the wilderness. Surely it was a slur on His gracious Providence to suppose that He had begun what He could not complete, and had done so much but could not do all.

But we are in danger of making the same mistake. Though behind us lay the gift of the Cross, the miracles of Resurrection and Ascension, the care exercised by God over our early years, the goodness and mercy of our after lives, we are disposed to say, "Can God?" Can God keep me from yielding to that besetting sin? Can God find me a situation, or provide food for my children? Can God extricate me from this terrible snare in which I am entangled? We look at the difficulties, the many who have succumbed, the surges that are rolling high, the poor devil-possessed child, and we say, *If* Thou canst do anything, help us!

Nay, nay, there is no *If* with God; there is no limit to His almightiness but thy unbelief. The words are wrongly placed. Never say again, "Can God?" but *God can*. Never, *If* Thou canst; but *If* I can believe. Never, *If* Thou canst Thou wilt; but *If* Thou wilt Thou canst; and Thou wilt, since Thou hast made and redeemed me, and Thou canst not forsake the work of Thine own hands. Argue from all the past to the present and future. Fetch arguments for faith from the days that have gone.

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink."

How long, O Lord?

Psa. lxxix. 5 (R. V.).

TO us, also, as to this long-suffering Jew, God's dealings seem sometimes interminable. We do not understand why the cloud hangs over us so long, why the pressure of trouble lasts year after year. We cry, "How long, O Lord?" in gusts of impatience; but take care not to hurry God unduly, lest thou force Him to forego doing His best work in thy life.

This parable helped me; may it help you to be silent, still, and long-suffering. A bar of iron, worth £1, when wrought into horseshoes, is worth £2; if made into needles, it is worth £70; if into pen-knife blades, it is worth £650; if into springs for watches, it is worth £50,000. What a drilling the poor bar must undergo to be worth this; but the more it is manipulated, the more it is hammered and passed through the fire, and beaten, and pounded, and polished, the greater its value.

So with the Jews. No other nation has passed through such awful trial and discipline as they have; but no other nation was capable of yielding such wealth of service to mankind, nor affording such untold service in the highest regions.

So with ourselves. Those that suffer most are capable of yielding most; and it is through pain that God is getting the most out of us for His glory and the blessing of others. It will be all right some day. We shall see it and be satisfied. Yes, great Father, we would like to be watchsprings. Take no heed of our cry if sometimes we forget ourselves and say, How long?

"Then haste Thee, Lord! Come down,
Take Thy great power and reign!
But frame Thee first a perfect crown
Of spirits freed from stain."

Turn us again, O God.

Psa. lxxx. 3.

THREE times we have this cry repeated in this psalm. Again and again, and each time with some additional thought, the soul pleads for Restoration (R. v., *marg.*).

The Master said to Peter: When thou art converted (*i. e.*, turned again) strengthen thy brethren. But Peter did not realize that the Master Himself would need to turn him. He turned his back on his Lord and denied Him; but Jesus turned him back, by that look, that message from His grave mouth, that interview in the garden and on the lake-shore. He turned him facewards to Himself, and caused his face to shine, and Peter was saved.

We can be regenerated only once, but we can be converted many times. The new life is implanted once for all, and it is everlasting, unextinguishable, and permanent; but those who have been born from above, and are undoubtedly children of God, may, beneath the power of some strong fascination, turn aside, may wander in forbidden paths, may get into such a maze as to be walking in the contrary direction to that on which they started. There may even be times when our desire for God is slackened, our appetite for the Bible is lost, our soul is bound and tied with the cords of sin; at such times, let us bemoan ourselves, our folly and impotence, and cry, "Turn us again, O God, and we shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord our God." He who at first called us to Himself must call us back: He who regenerated, must renew: He who reconciled us to God by His death, must save us by His life. When most dark, and dead, and estranged, cry with Ephraim: "Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God" (Jer. xxxi. 18).

Thou calledst, . . . I delivered; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder. Psa. lxxxi. 7.

SUCH trouble as Israel passed through in the Exodus comes but once in the history of a nation. From the brick-kilns and treasure-cities which they built, God's people called to Him with strong cryings and tears, extorted by insupportable sorrows. Still more did they need to cry for help when they stood between the Egyptians and the waters of the Red Sea. From the beach a nation's call rose to God. Then was their trouble and heart-travail—a nation in throes of pain! Are you in trouble? Call upon God in the day of trouble; He will answer.

God's answers are often in the secret place of thunder. From His pavilion of cloud God spoke in tones of thunder that pealed over the heavily-breaking surf of the Red Sea. Several of the Psalms allude to the thunderstorm that rolled through the night of the passage through the deep. The march of Israel was to the roll of thunder. The peals of heaven's artillery struck dismay into the hearts of the alien; but it was as though the Father was speaking to His children, the people with whom He was in covenant.

God's answer to our prayer is often in thunder-tones that hurtle through the air. By terrible things in righteousness He answers us. When Jesus asked the Father to glorify His name, the quiet reply, "I have . . . and will," which He understood, sounded like thunder to the bystanders. Happy the child who in thunder-claps detects the Father's voice, and in mystic characters of flame reads the Father's handwriting! Whilst, at Sinai, the people trembled at the repeated thunder-peals reverberating above them, Moses went into the thunder-covert where God was. There is no fear in love, because perfect love casteth out the fear that hath torment.

Arise, O God, judge the earth : for Thou shalt inherit all the nations. Psa. lxxxii. 8 (R. V.).

THE judges and magistrates are compared in this psalm to God, because they exercise something of His power in the right ordering of human society. The Bible always inculcates respect and reverence to properly constituted authority, though it never hesitates to demand of all in authority that they should exercise their high functions impartially. Too often has the high trust been abused, and the psalmist turns with relief to the upright Judge, and comforts himself with the reflection that one day God Himself shall judge the earth, because He shall inherit all the nations.

Christ is the Firstborn and Only Begotten. As such He shall inherit all things. They were made for Him. He is the Heir. He came in His incarnation to claim His inheritance; but His claim was denied. He was cast out of the vineyard and slain; but His claims were not annulled, they remained intact. And during the present age they are being vindicated; and in answer to His appeal He is receiving the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. One nation after another is becoming His province. The kings of the isles are bringing presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba are offering gifts.

It is great encouragement in missionary work to know that every nation is by *right* of gift and inheritance our Lord's. He sold His all to purchase it, because His treasure was buried here. It is ours to make it His in *fact*. It is always easy to work on the line of the Divine purpose. God never purposes outside what is practicable and possible for man to realize. Apprehend the purpose of God, and without hesitation claim its realization.

O God, keep not Thou silence; hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O God.

Psa. lxxxiii. 1 (R. V.).

OH that God would break the silence! If He would but say one word! If we might but hear that voice—deep as the sound of many waters, and tender as the call of love—just to say that He was there; that all which we believed was true; that He was satisfied and pleased; that our perplexities would work out right at last! It is so difficult sometimes to go on living day by day without one authoritative word; and we are prone to rebuke Him for silence, that He is still, that He holds His peace. “Be not Thou silent unto me, lest I be like those that go down into the pit.”

But God has not kept silence. The Word was manifested. In Him the silence of eternity was broken. And if Thou and I are still, if our ear is purged, and anointed with the blood and oil, if we make a great silence in our heart, we shall hear Him speak.

“Where is Thy haunt, Eternal Voice?
The region of Thy choice;
Where, undisturbed by earth, the soul
Owns Thy entire control.”

'Tis not where torrents are born, nor amid snow-capped peaks, nor in the break of the surf; but in the heart, weaned from itself, isolated in chambers of sickness, cast among strangers, yearning for tender voices that cannot make themselves heard—there God is no longer still. He breaks the silence. “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God.” “It is I; be not afraid.” It is always easy to detect God's voice, because it is full of Jesus, who is the Word of God, and it is corroborated by Providence; but the heart must be still, and on the listen!

The Lord God is a sun and shield : the Lord will give grace and glory.

Psa. lxxxiv. 11.

HOW God suits Himself to our need ! In darkness, He is a Sun ; in the sultry noon, a Shield ; in our earthly pilgrimage He gives grace ; when the morning of heaven breaks, He will give glory. He suits Himself to every varying circumstance in life. He becomes what the exigency of the moment requires. And as the psalmist well says, He withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly. Learn the art of extracting from God the special form of help of which you stand in need.

The Sun is the source of light and life. With impartial beneficence he scatters his beams on palace and cottage, mountain summit and lowland vale. He is ever pouring out his beams. It is our part only to stand in them, or to open casement or door. God is shining, dear heart. Get out of thyself, and sun thy shivering frame in His untiring love.

A Shield may be the shadow of a great rock in the scorching desert, or the canopy of a gourd's growth. Put God between yourself and the sirocco of temptation. Is the noon with its burning heat too much for thee ? Hide in the Lord God. The heat shall not smite thee by day, nor the frost by night.

Dost thou need *Grace* ? He is full of it. His grace is sufficient. With both hands He will give and give again ; only practice the habit of taking. Grace is the bud of which *Glory* is the flower. If He has given this, He will not withhold that. If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst be sure that *Glory* in germ is within thee, waiting only for the summer of Eternity to develop in perfect beauty. "We have had our access by faith into this *grace* wherein we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the *glory* of God."

Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. . . . *Psa. lxxxv. 10.*

THIS has been fitly called "the bridal of the earth and sky." *Mercy* is the love that finds its reason in itself, its measure in helplessness and ill-desert. But in God it is always blended with *Truth*. God must be faithful to His covenant relations, to His Son, to Himself, and to the law which He has instituted. Any display of mercy must be consistent with truth. These are heavenly twins. Where you meet one you will be sure of the other. Jesus was full of grace and truth. The love He brings is consistent with the highest considerations; and by His death it is so arranged that God acts consistently with His holy law in loving and saving the meanest and weakest believer.

Righteousness has for her twin sister *Peace*. "The effect of righteousness shall be peace." The King of Righteousness is after that the King of Peace. If you want peace, you must be right with God; and if you would be right with God, you must come to Jesus and become united to Him, who is made unto us the righteousness of God. At the cross these two kissed. The righteousness of God was satisfied, and the peace of man secured.

What a wondrous cross is that on which the Prince of Glory died! The question was—How could God be just, and yet justify the ungodly? How could He uphold the majesty of the moral law, and yet take sinners to His heart? But the answer came clear and satisfying, when the Maker of Man took on Himself our sin and gave justice its due. Now see that perfect blending of the Divine attributes, and that God is "just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Oh that truth might spring up as the response and echo of our hearts!

Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.

Psa. lxxxvi. 5.

WE are blinded by sin, and cannot believe that God is *ready to forgive*. We think that we must induce Him to forgive, by tears, promises of amendment, religious observances. There is in every heart such difficulty in understanding the unwearying patience and ever-yearning love of our Heavenly Father. Oh, clasp this word to your heart! Say it over and over again—“Ready to forgive, ready to forgive!” At any moment of the sad history of the prodigal, had he returned, he would have found his old father as ready to forgive as on the day, too long delayed, when he did return. The only pity was that he had not come long before.

You have fallen a hundred times, and are ashamed to come to God again; it seems too much to expect that He will receive you again. But He will, for He is *ready to forgive*. You feel that your sin is aggravated, because you knew so much better; but it makes no difference to Him, He is as *ready to forgive* you now, as when first you came. You are disposed to wait a little, till your sin has become more remote, till passion has subsided, till the inscription has faded from the wall; but you might as well go at once, God is as *ready to forgive* at this moment as at any future time. You are wounding Him greatly by doubting Him. He is ready, waiting, eager to forgive. You have only to call upon Him, and you would discover the plenteousness of His mercy. How ready Jesus ever was to forgive sinners, herein revealing God's heart!

“O Love, Thou deep eternal tide,
How dear are men to Thee!
The Father's heart is opened wide
By Jesus' blood to me.”

All my fountains are in Thee.

Psa. lxxxvii. 7 (R. V.).

“ALL my fresh springs,” the Prayer-book version has it. Perennial freshness! This is our portion. We have only to abide in Christ in daily, hourly faith, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, for where that is secured there need be no further effort; naturally, perennially, plentifully, there will arise in us the fountains whose source is God, and the ultimate destination of whose waters are the wildernesses and deserts around.

Do you want freshness in *your love*? The vintages of other years cannot provide you with the ruddy clusters and the wine of sacrifice required for present day needs. You want new enthusiasm, tenderness, and interest in those around you. Deepen your union with God by faith and prayer. Your fresh springs are in Him; He will Himself be in you a spring of living water, rising up to everlasting life and love.

Do you want freshness in *your views of truth*? There are such constant demands made on your teaching powers, that you are sometimes fearful of exhaustion. But if you keep your heart open to God, and your soul perpetually nourished by Scripture, you will find that God’s thoughts will come freshly and brightly to you—new as each morning, fresh as spring.

Do you want freshness in *your religious life*? This, too, is His gift, because the life we live in the flesh is, after all, not our own life, but His. Jesus is in us, the Hope and Fount of the true life. All He wants is to have orifices, channels, openings in the rocky soil, and He will arise in us heavenward and Godward, as fountains in the sunny air. Rise up in us, Thou Blessed One, who art evermore the resurrection and the life!

Incline Thine ear unto my cry, for my soul is full of troubles.
Psa. lxxxviii. 2, 3.

THE psalmist has found the quickest argument before his God. There is nothing that so quickly makes the bell ring in heaven as the touch of a troubled hand. When a man is full of the interests of life, of prosperity, and self-content; when the voices of applause resound on every side; when his house is full of children, and his barn of sheaves, his prayer halts, and God seems far away. But let trouble come—let the waters, swollen by many confluent streams, begin to rise within his soul, so that lover and friend are far away, and he compassed with terror (16, 18), then God bends His ear and heart.

O child of sorrow, do not count that you are cast away! It is true that your Lord cried from His Cross, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" but even Him, though laden with the sins of the world, the Father held near His heart. And He has not left you, neither can He.

"The earth and every vassal star,
All space beyond the soar of angel wings,
Wait on His word; and yet He stays His ear
For every sigh a suppliant sinner brings."

Try and think of trouble as storing your heart with seeds of joy; as acting upon you as the fire upon the primeval earth, scattering jewels through its crust; or as the glaciers that brought the rich soil into the valleys; or as the husbandman who buries the seeds of spring in the autumn fields. A veiled angel, nothing else!

"But if, impatient, thou let slip thy Cross,
Thou wilt not find it in this world again,
Nor in another; here, and here alone,
Is given thee to suffer for God's sake."

Nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him.

Psa. lxxxix. 32, 33.

I WAS asked the other day if I believed, as an increasing number were said to do, that each man bears his own sin, and that there is no such thing as the vicarious imputation of the sins of the world to the Lamb of God. I said at once that this idea, so growingly prevalent, would not avail to help men and women like many of those with whom I come in contact, and are deeply dyed. Tell them that they must bear their own sin, and they turn from you in despair. This is what conscience has been reading to them hourly from the stony book of the law. The soul dreads to have to bear its sin, and cries out for propitiation and covering. A dying man said recently, "I have been into the valley of death, and where is my covering?" Men need a covering. It is requisite that help should be laid upon One that is mighty (ver. 19).

We need to distinguish between guilt and secondary consequences of sin. For guilt we must have the transference of the black load of sin to our Saviour. But it is also perfectly true that the nervous or physical system of the drunkard will never be what it might have been. The consequences of wrongdoing must be reaped. God will forgive you, and His loving-kindness will not depart; but He will visit your transgression with the rod, and your iniquity with stripes. But even here His mercy will avail to transform the curse into a blessing, and make myrtles bloom where thistles had flourished. God's love can so transmute these results of sin, that where sin reigned unto death, grace shall reign unto eternal life. But never forget that, when once God has entered into covenant with a soul, He will stand to it, till the heavens be no more.

Oh, satisfy us in the morning with Thy mercy.

Psa. xc. 14 (R. V.).

IT was toward the close of the desert wanderings that Moses wrote this sublime psalm, all the imagery of which is borrowed from the wilderness. The watch around the camp-fire at night; the rush of the mountain flood; the grass that sprouts so quickly after the rain, and is as quickly scorched; the sigh of the wearied pilgrim (9 R. V., *marg.*). As the old man looks back on life, he gives it as his experience that the heart which is satisfied with mercy in the morning, never fails to rejoice and be glad all its days.

There is no hour like that of morning prime for fellowship with God. If we would dare to wait before Him for satisfaction *then*, the filling of that hour would overflow into all other hours. A bright Christian lad, giving his brief testimony for Jesus, recently, told his secret when he said that at his conversion he trusted the Lord with his morning hour; and the way he spoke of it indicated the radiancy of the light that shone for him then.

Perhaps the morning of life was rather in Moses' thought. If so, the old man has prepared a prayer in which successive generations of bright children may join. Young ones, do you want a glad and rejoicing life? Do you want to live by the wells that never dry up or freeze? Seek God's mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord, and the day will never dawn when you will regret having made that choice: nay, every day will be full of rejoicing gladness. I like that record of the holy Columba, at the end of his saintly life, "Angelic in appearance, graceful in speech, holy in work, beloved by all—for a holy joy ever beaming on his face revealed the joy and gladness with which the Holy Spirit filled his inmost soul."

Thou, O Lord, art my refuge.

Psa. xci. 9 (R. V.).

THE structure of this psalm is often obscured. It begins with the announcement on the part of the chorus of the general truth that to dwell in the inner place of fellowship is to abide under the protection of Divine Power.

Twice the psalmist speaks. In the second verse we hear him saying:—

“ I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and
my fortress,
My God in whom I trust.”

In the ninth verse he breaks in again:—

“ For Thou, O Lord, art my refuge.”

And each profession on his part is followed by the outburst of the chorus with an enunciation of all the blessings which most certainly will accrue.

In the last three verses God Himself is introduced, assuring His child of all that He is prepared to do and be. Have you ever said definitely, “ O Lord, thou art my refuge ” ? Fleeing from all other, have you sheltered in Him from the windy storm and tempest, from the harrow by day, and pestilence by night, from man and devil ? You must avow it. Do not only think it, but say it. Keep saying it because it *is* true, rather than because you *feel* it to be true. Not only in the midst of sympathizing friends, but in hours of loneliness, desertion, and opposition.

In a farm, in which I am interested, we have an incubator, the artificial heat of which hatches hundreds of little chickens ; but there always seems a great lack in their lives—no mother’s call or wing. They invariably remind me of those who have not sheltered under the wing of God.

I am anointed with fresh oil.

Psa. xcii. 10 (R. V.).

THERE is perennial freshness in God—in the works of nature, in His love, and in the renewal of the soul. Does the eye ever tire of the changeable beauty of the clouds? Though we look out from childhood to old age on the same landscape, there is always something fresh to captivate the roving eye. Think of the unfailing freshness in love—love of woman to man, of mother to child. Think of the freshness of each returning day, of earth in her springtime robe, with the myriads of sweet children, whose laughter is as ringing and their eyes as bright as if the earth were young, instead of being old and weary. And if God can do this for the works of His hands, is there any limit in the freshness which He will communicate to His children?

Each morning bend your heads, ye priests of the Most High, for the fresh anointing for the new ministries that await you. The former grace and strength will not suffice; old texts must be rejuvenated and reminted; old vows must be re-spoken; the infilling of the Holy Spirit must be as vivid, and may be as definite, as at the first. See to it that you do not rise from your knees till you can say, "I have been, and am anointed with the fresh oil." And the anointing that ye receive from Him shall abide on you, teaching you how to abide in Him. So you shall bring forth fruit in old age, and in life's winter be full of sap and fervor.

Pastor Harm used to say: Pray diligently. I do not mean your common prayer alone; but pray diligently in your room daily for the Holy Spirit. How their faces shine, who receive this daily unguent!

The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice.
Psa. xciii. 3.

HOW often a man says these words over to himself as he paces the deck of the steamer in mid-Atlantic! There is no commentary to this psalm like that supplied by the break of the waves. Sometimes the voice of the floods is deafening; you cannot hear yourself speak; at other times all night, through the port-hole, you hear their musical break beneath. The lifted up voice of the sea gives many notes in the great organ of nature, sometimes the deep bass, at other times the silvery treble. One says to one's self —

“What are the wild waves saying?”

They may be inciting one another to a work of destruction and devastation, roaring in their rage, fretting for supremacy. Why should they endure the presence of man in their wild waste? He is an intruder. The sea-gulls are welcome; they are at home as in their native element, but man has no right.

So do the waves of trouble roar wildly around the bark of our life. There are times when surge on surge rolls in upon the soul, and breaks with boom and roar; but always there floats upon the soul the refrain of this sublime canticle, “Above the voices of many waters the Lord on High is mighty.” He sits as King, higher than the spray is tossed, deeper than the fathomless depths, mightier than the strongest billow. Let Him but say, “Peace, be still!” and the greatest storm that ever swept the waves with wild fury sinks into the tranquil sleep of childhood. Or, if we sink beneath the wave, we shall but fall into the hollow of God's hand, where the oceans are cradled.

*Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, that
Thou mayest give him rest. Psa. xciv. 12, 13.*

THE reason of chastening is rest-giving. God chastens us that He may give us rest from the days of adversity. In sorrow we learn lessons which serve us in good stead when others suffer without remedy. In trial-times the child of God falls back upon the lessons his Father taught him out of the black letter-book of pain, and he knows how to comport himself. Thus he finds rest to his soul, rest in the will of God, rest in humble submission to his lot, rest in the wisdom that cannot err, in the love that cannot forget.

God teaches all the scholars in His school. He dares entrust none to an usher. Enter thyself as a scholar in the academy of grace, and thou shalt at once be taught, as all His children are, of God.

There is but one text-book for the whole school. It is always the Law of God. We learn from it when we are babes. In mature life we resort to it at every emergency. In old age we feel we never understood before its meaning or beauty. It is God's "horn-book."

Those who have sat longest under God's tuition profess they know least. Instead of beginning at the lowest class and working up, we begin at the highest, and work down. The grey-heads sit on the infants' forms, and the simplest are the wisest. There is blessedness, not in roaming the fields, but in sitting on the bench and learning what God teaches each soul that will give heed.

Some day, the lessons will be done, the doors thrown open, and the scholars will be dismissed, never to return to the hard bare forms, but to go for holy-days of never-ending gladness in the Father's home.

Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

Psa. xcvi. 11.

GOD'S Rest has been waiting for man's entrance, since He rested from all the work that He created and made. To all other days there were evening and morning, but not to this. It does not consist in circumstances, or conditions of existence, but in disposition. It does not lie, as sacred poets have too often suggested, beyond the confines of this world—it is now, and here. Canaan is not primarily a type of heaven; but of that blessed experience which is ours when we have passed the Jordan of death to natural impulse or selfish choice, and have elected forevermore to accept, and delight in, the will of God.

Will you not take up this position to-day? *To-day!* Oh that ye would hear His voice! To hear His voice speaking in the heart, in circumstances, and in nature, and to obey promptly, gladly, blithely,—this would bring the soul into the rest that remains unexhausted for the people of God. Are you hardening your heart against some evident duty to which you are called, but which you are evading? Are you hardening your heart to some appeal which comes to you through the ties of kinship and nature? Are you saying, Can God subdue these Canaanites, instead of *God can?* Beware, for this is the sin of Massah and Meribah, which, being interpreted, means *strife*. Woe to those that strive with their Maker; let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth.

Every one comes in the Christian life, once at least, to Kadesh-barnea. On the one hand the land of rest and victory; on the other the desert wastes. The balance, quivering between the two, is turned this way by faith; that by unbelief. Trust God, and rest. Mistrust Him, and the door closes on rest, to open to wanderings, failure, and defeat.

Say among the nations, The Lord reigneth.

Isa. xcvi. 10 (R. V.).

TELL it out! The message is too good to warrant silence. That the Lord is King is the secret of jubilation and blessing for all the world.

Nature is glad, because his rule will emancipate her from the thralldom under which she has groaned too long. When the kingdom is established in the hand of the Son of Man, the long travail of creation will be over; the new heavens and earth will have emerged. Therefore the psalmist depicts the outburst of thanksgiving from seas, and fields, and trees.

The world of men may be glad also, because the reign of Jesus means equity for the oppressed, equal-handed justice for the poor, peace among the nations.

But, above all, gladness becomes the saints. If the Lord Jesus has become King of your heart, and has brought blessing to you, do not hesitate to give voice to your allegiance. In private, sing unto Him a new song; in public, show forth His salvation, and declare His glory. Tell it out, tell it out! Have you ever seriously considered whether it may not be God's will for you to give up your life to going forth to distant lands, to tell it out that God has made Jesus King, and that He must reign, and that His reign is blessedness?

Probably but a very brief interval remains, during which we can tell it out. Human history has well-nigh fulfilled its six working-days, and approaches its millennial rest; the times of the Gentiles, according to every computation, are nearly fulfilled; the lawlessness, which was to mark the last days, is conspicuously manifest; the bride is rapidly completing her preparation for the marriage-feast—haste then, O heralds of Salvation, prepare in the deserts a highway for our God.

Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

Psa. xcvii. 11.

LIGHT means recognition, joy, song. These await such as are clad about with the righteousness of Christ, and are following the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Never swerve from the path of the righteous; however trying and dark your present experience may be, it leads to a harvest-home of joy beyond the years.

Sowing is sad work. It is a casting away of precious seed; the flinging far and wide of the treasured stores of the barn; an expenditure of the present for the future. The sower's heart might fail if it pictured the field mice, the rotting rains, the blighting mildew, which have ruined so many hopes, and lie in wait. So the present is your sowing-time; but every moment of trial, each stab of pain, nobly borne, is a seed-germ cast into the furrows, which will certainly bring a blessed recompense of light. You do not realize it, but you are sowing light. Each act of self-denial, in which you cast yourself into the ground to die, is a seed-germ of the harvest of gladness.

Coal is sown light. When the forests in all the glory of their foliage were hurled into the bosom of the primeval earth, and desolation reigned, it seemed a sad waste of the Creator's work. Who could have realized then that God was really sowing the light of winter nights, the fires of factory and forge? Do not be too sad. Harvest will come, though the weeks move slowly.

“All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of Good shall exist:
Not its semblance, but itself; no Beauty, nor Good, nor Power,
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist,
When Eternity affirms the conception of an hour.”

Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song!

Psa. xcvi. 1.

COME, my soul, thou must awake to sing a new song. Thou hast dwelt long enough on those old, sad, minor chords of loss and disappointment, of regret for the withered past, of bitter remorse. Surely there is something better, nobler, worthier of thee and thy great Lord. Has He not done, is He not doing, marvellous new things in thy daily experience? Are not His mercies new every morning, and His faithfulness every night? Is not His love always at work spreading thy table for new meals, making thy bed for new slumber, contriving new alleviations and delights? Look out for these till meditation induces thanksgiving.

There is always a new song in heaven, because ever a fresh and deepening appreciation of God. The exploring parties are continually bringing back some fresh and wonderful produce of God's wisdom and grace; and as they hold it up to the admiration of kindred spirits, the exhibition elicits new songs. Through the Church is made known to the principalities and powers of the heavenlies the manifold wisdom of God. The song of redeeming grace can never grow old, even though the same words recur; they resemble the banks of the stream through which waters are passing that never passed before. My soul, listen to the bursting harmonies of creation, seas, floods, hills; they chide thee. Cast off the spirit of heaviness, and don the garment of praise. Perchance thy soul is sluggish and dull. But it should not master thee. The psalmist was master of his soul; and when he bade it bless the Lord, all that was within him broke forth into melodious thanksgiving. Let thy spirit, energized by the Holy Spirit, be regnant over the entire realm of thy inner life.

Samuel among them that call upon His name.

Psa. xcix. 6.

EVIDENTLY those that call upon the name of God compose a separate class. There are classes of prophets, pastors, teachers; and there are the mighty wrestlers with God, whose voices are familiar sounds in the Divine presence chamber. It is a high honor to be included among them that call upon His name. If you cannot find your place in any other class, perhaps it is here. Possibly you have great gifts of prayer and intercession, which you have never rightly employed, to your own great loss, and the loss of others. Do not wait for God's Angel of Providence to shut you forcibly into a lonely chamber, and compel you to use your great gift.

Samuel's prayers are frequently referred to. At times he would cry unto God all night. He counted it a sin to cease to pray for the people. His prayers secured the defeat of the Philistines; and the nation sheltered itself in His intercessions. We can never estimate the worth of a good man's prayers; and they lift a man like Samuel, destitute of commanding genius, to stand side by side with Moses in the estimate of Eternity.

In a memorable interview with the late George Müller, he told me some of his wonderful experiences in dealing with a prayer-answering God. Just before he died he heard of the conversion of an old man, for whom he had prayed during fifty years. May not he, and such as he, be remembered in this holy category? Oh to be remembered among those that call on God's name! But always bear in mind the thrice accentuated message of this Psalm (3, 5, 9), that God is holy. It is only as we are cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, that we can prevail in intercessory prayer.

*We are His ; we are His people, and the sheep
of His pasture.* *Psa. c. 3 (R. V.).*

THE sense of God's proprietorship is the true basis of our consecration. We must realize His rights over us before we can freely give Him His due. Those rights are manifold in their sweet reasonableness; but amongst them all, this of creation is one of the chief. God has a right to us because He has made us.

He made us, as the potter fashions the clay, for a distinct purpose; and surely He has a right to use the vessels of His workmanship for the purpose unto which He has designed them.

He made us, as the builder erects a house for the purpose of inhabiting it; and surely He has a right to occupy every distinct room, and go to and fro in it as He may please.

He made us, as the hand of the weaver makes some textile fabric for wearing; and surely He must not be debarred from the free and unquestioned disposal of that on which He has expended anxiety and time.

We are Christ's by creation, by purchase, by toils and tears, by the gift of the Father. The Good Shepherd owns us, though we do not always acknowledge His ownership, or repay His pains and wounds on our behalf. Look up into His face and say, "I am Thine by a myriad ties, and am bound to Thee forevermore. Lead me where Thou wilt; guide me whither Thou chooseth; count me as one of Thy people; feed me on Thy pasture-lands; make as much of me as Thou canst, this side of heaven; number me with Thy saints in glory everlasting."

"With bowed heads and open hearts," says Dr. Westcott, "may we offer ourselves. We can do no more, and we dare do no less."

I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

Psa. ci. 2.

THIS is the hardest place to walk in perfectly. It seems easier to walk perfectly among strangers than in one's own house. But you may rest assured that a man is really no better than he is to his own. You must not gauge your worth by what the outside world thinks and says, but by the estimate of those that see you in the ordinary intercourse of the home.

To be perfectly courteous to those whom you are meeting at every meal; to hold yourself under perfect control when worried by tiny insidious jars, and stung by almost invisible gnats; to maintain always the perfect girding of the loins; to have the head always anointed and the face always washed; to realize God's ideal, love's ideal, and your own. Ah, me! this requires the utmost grace that God can give. To die once is easy; to live always with an undivided heart, this is hard.

Understand that in the home-life God is educating and training you for the greatest victories. There you are learning the deepest lessons in sanctification. You need not run to conventions, sermons, and holiness meetings; if you would resolve to walk in your house with a perfect heart, you would discover how far from perfect you are, and how you are the least of His saints. Seek the perfect heart in your home-life; for then God will come unto you, and dwell beneath your roof, and the story of Bethany would be re-duplicated for your household and yourself.

“Perhaps ‘a single heart’ is never known,
Save in the yielded life that lives for God alone;
And that is therefore doubted as a dream
By those who know not the tremendous power
Of all-constraining love.”

But Thou art the same.

Psa. cii. 27.

THIS psalm is by an anonymous singer. All we know of him is that he was overwhelmed, and poured out his complaint before God. But that lonely, sorrowful heart caught glimpses of God, which it has transmitted to all the world, enriching it forevermore. Sometimes we are led to wander alone in desolate places to catch new visions of the Eternal, hidden from ordinary souls; thus ardent artists are indifferent to peril and privation if they can catch a mountain from some fresh point of vision, and transfer a passing glimpse to their immortal canvas.

This psalm is despairful enough in its earlier passages. The smoke-wreath dissipated in the breeze, the withered grass of the desert, the declining shadow, the chirrup of a lonely sparrow—such are the images that occur naturally enough. But as he sings the man's vision clears. He looks away from the earth-mists to the Eternal God. Here, at least, is the permanent and unchanging. Did He make all things? Then He can unmake them, and be Himself evermore the same. Let the earth vanish like a dream; let the time-sphere be ended; let the very heavens wear out like a moth-eaten garment; let the nearest and dearest pass from our embrace. Thou art the same; Thou art left; Thou remainest. "All that is transitory forsaketh us; but Christ's seal of recognition forsaketh us not even in death, but bringeth us to the joyful heavenly host, unto our eternal fatherland."

The writer to the Hebrews attributes these words to Him who was the brightness of the Father's glory (Heb. i.). We should read the psalm again with this reference in our mind. Our Saviour is God, and He is the unchanging Rock of Ages in whom we may shelter.

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

Psa. ciii. 17.

NOTE the contrast. Man's frailty against the everlastingness of God's mercy. We are frail as the flower of the field. Each generation of man comes forth like the grass and flowers, which clothe the meadows in spring only to meet the remorseless scythe. But frail as is our physical life, our resolutions and intentions are still more so. One day our soul is covered by the laughing beauty of hope, and faith, and love, kindly thoughts, heavenly aspirations, gracious deeds—the next the whole crop lies smitten and withered.

But God's love does not alter with our alter-ings, or change with our changes. Does the mother's love fluctuate with the moods of her sick babe? God loves constantly, with an ardent, intense affection, which delivers from dross the heart that is yielded to Him, and secures at last its transformation into His own likeness. If you will let Him, God will yet love you right. Love will make even your tough nature a miracle of beauty. But the friction of the lapidary's wheel and the diamond dust may hurt you a little. Never mind, love is behind it all. There never was a time when He did not love you—His mercy is from everlasting; nor a time when He will love you less—it is to everlasting.

When at last you have found your centre in God's love, a joy will arise within you, which will pour itself forth in blessing, and you will find yourself but one chorister among myriads in heaven and earth. It will appear to you as though angels and hosts in heaven, together with the saints of all the dispensations on earth, compose one vast choir. But none has any right to presume on this mercy, unless the condition of godly fear has been fulfilled.

Who maketh the clouds His chariot.

Psa. civ. 3.

AS I write these words on the bosom of the broad Atlantic, there is little for the eye to rest on but the heaving waters through which we are swiftly cutting our path, and the expanse of sky through which float the great piles of cloud. It is pleasant to think of them as the chariots of God; the heavens beyond are the curtains of His tent; this wind is His swift-stepping messenger; this exquisite light glancing on sky and sea is His garment, hardly dense enough to veil His visible Presence. O Nature, how can we do other than love thee, since the Being of our God is so closely mingled with thy hues and forms!

How often God visits us in a chariot of cloud! We look up and see the looming darkness, and forebode evil. But if we could look down, as from a seat in the heavenlies, we should behold our God sitting within, radiant with golden glory, and hastening to bless. In dry, waterless lands, the rain-bearing clouds are signally the chariots of blessing.

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”

When the soul, says one, is born again into the Divine light, she becometh a humble, loving, winning creature, that beareth every cross and reproach, that regardeth no insult, either from man or devil, that placeth her love and confidence in the heart of God, full of joy, fed by the Word of God, bathed in a smile of heavenly triumph. But the reason for this is in the absolute confidence that God is in all our life, and that

“The cloud which spreads above,
And veileth love
Itself is Love.”

He was laid in chains of iron.

Psa. cv. 18 (R. v.).

THE margin of the R. v. suggests another rendering: "His soul entered into the iron." May we not yet again turn the sentence round, and say that the iron entered into his soul? When we first meet him, Joseph is a tender, yielding lad, with dreams of rule, but no conspicuous power. Yet he emerges from his captivity well qualified to take the helm of Egypt, just then sore driven and tossed by tempest. How can this striking transformation be accounted for, save that he had taken iron into his moral nature through his painful experiences?

The physician often prescribes an iron tonic for anæmic patients: and what iron is to the outer man that also the captivity of circumstances, deferred hope, and anguish of soul are to the inner. You have been fickle and uncertain of late; dreaming of power, but powerless; yearning for the only good, but greedy of trifles; you must have a course of iron. God wants Iron Dukes, and Iron souls. And there is a process also by which He can turn Iron to Steel. It means high temperature, sudden transitions, and blasts of heavenly air.

"If call'd, like Abraham's child, to climb
The hill of sacrifice,
Some angel may be there in time—
Deliverance shall arise!

"Or if some darker lot be good,
Oh, teach us to endure
The sorrow, pain, or solitude
That make the spirit pure!"

Life is very mysterious. Indeed it would be inexplicable unless we believed that God was preparing us for scenes and ministries that lie beyond the veil of sense in the eternal world, where highly-tempered spirits will be required for special service.

He gave them their request ; but sent leanness into their soul.

Psa. cvi. 15.

ISRAEL insisted on being fed, not with manna only, but with flesh. The people complained of their heaven-sent food as too light and unsatisfying. Their gross appetite demanded some heavier diet. So the wind brought down quails, flying a few feet from the ground, within easy reach of club or stick. These they ate ravenously, voraciously, greedily. "The people rose up all that day, and all the night, and all the next day, and gathered the quails." Their pampered bodies were gorged with food. They had their desire, but their souls were starved. "While the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague." They were buried in the graves of lust.

Generally speaking, the soul and body fare inversely. When the body is pampered with every luxury, the soul starves. The soul thrives best when the body cries out. Probably we all have to choose, not once or twice, in life, whether we will have the full satisfaction of our appetites, and lean souls; or be lean as to our circumstances, while the spirit is keen, alert, and full of vigorous life.

It seems as though the shadow of the eternal were perpetually hiding from us the eternal itself. Those that snatch at the shadow miss the eternal; those who refuse to be satisfied with the shadow, reach the satisfying vision of God; and to find God is to find all in and with Him. Oh, do not seek to impose your will on God; do not insist on anything with too great vehemence; let God choose. Whenever you make request for things, which are not definitely promised, ask God not to grant them, except it be for the very best.

*Even they shall understand the loving-kindness
of the Lord.*

Psa. cvii. 43.

“THE Harvest of a Quiet Eye” is the fascinating title of a fascinating book. When the heart is quiet in God, the eye looks out on the scenes of nature and life around it, and detects everywhere, even where to ordinary men every appearance seems in the contrary direction, the loving-kindness of the Lord. As life advances, and one climbs the hill, one is able to review the path by which life has been directed and controlled. We observe with the wisdom which we have obtained by long experience, and we understand God’s reasons for many rebuffs, denials, and bitter disappointments. I believe that we shall one day turn to Him, and say, when we know all, “Thou couldst not have done otherwise. We would not have wished otherwise.”

Consider the successive vignettes of this psalm. Love broods over the weary caravan that faints in the desert; visits the prison-house with its captives; watches by our beds of pain; notices each lurch of the tempest-driven vessel; brings the weary hosts from the wilderness into the fruitful soil.

Love is quick to appreciate love. It is natural to a loving heart to find love everywhere. We view all things in hues borrowed from the heart. “He that loveth knoweth God, for God is love; he that loveth not hath not seen Him, neither known Him.” Ask therefore for a baptism unto the love of God—this will make you quick to perceive and understand His loving-kindness, where others miss it. Be patient also to await the end of the Lord. And when still the vision tarries, dare to believe that one day, when you know as you are known, you shall understand the loving-kindness that underlay your darkest experiences.

He it is that shall tread down our adversaries.

Psa. cviii. 13 (R. V.).

THIS is the best way to fight. Keep quietly in fellowship with God; and when the enemy draws nigh, look up to your ever-present Friend, and say, "Now, Lord, now tread down this adversary." When we are observing the conditions which the psalmist enumerates in this psalm, it is easy to do this. Notice what they are.

The heart must be fixed in an attitude of consecration and devotion. We must be awake right early, for fellowship with God, putting on the armor before entering into the battle. We must exalt God in our life and by our lips. Then God will speak in His holiness in our behalf; and when He is for us, who can be against us? Hark to the exultation of the saint. Shechem, Gilead, Manasseh, were famous for their luxuriant fertility, and typify the heavenly graces appropriated by faith. Moab, Edom, Philistia, are synonyms for fierce hostility, and recall our besetting sins, our virulent foes, which fall before us when we are in alliance with the Almighty.

Micah caught sight of this truth, when he said, "The Breaker is gone up before them; their King is passed on before them, and the Lord at the head of them." Yes, the Shepherd goes before His flock, but the flock must follow Him. We must not be content with the knowledge that all things are ours in Christ, but must enter on their possession and enjoyment. Of what use is it to know that mines of precious ore lie under the broad acres of an estate, unless they are brought to the surface and prepared for the service of man. And we must not let ourselves be robbed of our heritage in Christ, through the hatred of our spiritual foes, when He waits to tread them under His feet and ours.

Let them curse, but bless Thou.

Psa. cix. 28.

THIS is the Iscariotic psalm. The Apostle Peter quoted it, as applying to Judas, on the occasion of electing a successor to the traitor; but the Church has no desire to appropriate against him or any of her foes the awful anathemas of the psalmist. In reading them we must remember—first, that they may be treated as predictions rather than imprecations, not *let*, but *shall*; secondly, that those earlier days had much of the thunder of Sinai and little enough of the tender accents of Calvary; thirdly, that it seemed to the lovers of God all important that wickedness should be punished in this life, as they had very dim conceptions of the next, and it might appear, otherwise, that God was indifferent to moral distinctions.

Men still curse us. It is one of the badges that we belong to the Lord's household, that they call us Beelzebub. The offence of the Cross has not ceased; and if none curse us, we may seriously question whether we are following in the footsteps of the Crucified. We must be baptized into our Saviour's death, and die with Him to all fear of man. Until we are willing to be counted the offscouring of all things, we have not entered into the true significance of baptism into His death, and participation in His risen life. The late George Müller said that he made no progress till he came to this. But when we are willing to forfeit our character, to die to our reputation, to be fools for Christ's sake, then God begins to bless. When men revile, and persecute, and say all manner of evil against us falsely for Christ's sake, God whispers in our heart, "Great is your reward in heaven." You never will know how near and tender God can be, till you are cast out by your kind.

Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power.

Psa. cx. 3.

THE literal rendering of the Hebrew is preferable: "Thy people shall be free-will offerings in the day of Thy power." When we recall the quotations of the first verse of this psalm in the New Testament, we have no difficulty in understanding what is meant by the day of His power. It is beyond doubt the day of His ascension, of His enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and of the advent of the Holy Spirit.

Whensoever the Holy Spirit is supreme in a church there will be a free-will offering of young hearts and lives. Clad in the priestly garb of stainless purity, pouring forth from the womb of life's young morning, they will scatter themselves over the weary earth like myriads of dew-drops on withered vegetation. The Priest-King has a wonderful fascination for youthful volunteers; and as He is so are they.

Have you become a free-will offering? There is every claim for your entire and devoted service. You have been already included in the Father's gift to the Son; but you must come to Him for yourself. The world has yet to learn what God can do with a soul that is entirely given up to Him. Let Him have your life to shape and mould it, to inspire and infill, to send forth on His errands, to commission for His service. There are no pressed men in our Master's army—all are volunteers. Offer your will to God; say you are willing to be made willing: He can make you willing in this day of His power, as iron is bent in the fierce flame.

"In full and glad surrender we give ourselves to Thee,
Thine utterly, and only, and evermore to be!
O Son of God, who lovest us, we will be Thine alone,
And all we are, and all we have, shall henceforth be
Thine own!"

The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Psa. cxi. 2.

THE merchant goes forth to seek goodly pearls. Go forth, O Christian heart, to discover fresh jewels in thy Saviour's character. You will find them in meditation, in converse with other souls, but mainly in the reverent investigation of Scripture.

The theme of the Bible is—the works of the Lord. Its constant affirmation is that they are *great*; that His work is honor and majesty; that He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered; that He shows His people the power of His works; and that the works of His hands are truth and judgment. Where better could we study or seek them out?

Consider God's works in Creation, as scene after scene is unfolded in the first chapter of Genesis; in destruction, as when the Deluge swept the earth; in redemption, when He led His people out of Egypt; in judgment, when He handed His people over to their enemies; in the holy Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection of Jesus, and in the coming of the Paraclete. Seek out these great and wonderful works; trace the references made to them in every part of Scripture; find a holy pleasure in reviewing them in all their wealth of significance.

Kepler, when he first turned his telescope to clustered worlds, exclaimed, "I am thinking over again the first thoughts of God." Would that the ecstasy of the ardent student of nature might fill our hearts as we direct our thought to the great works of our Saviour-God. But our attitude, like His, must be one of reverence, patience, and dependence on the revealing Spirit. Probably this will be our employment in eternity; ever passing into deeper and fuller appreciation of the works of God, and breaking into more rapturous songs.

*He shall not be afraid of evil tidings : his heart
is fixed, trusting in the Lord. Psa. cxii. 7.*

THERE cannot be evil tidings to the soul which has fixed its trust in the Lord. Every messenger that comes post-haste into its presence with despatches brings tidings of what has been permitted or done by our Father; and nothing which is of His ordering or permitting can really injure us. Tidings! tidings! they are always pouring in, by letter, post-card, and telegram. They are presented in the contents bills of every newspaper, and cried by the newsboys in the streets. But the child of God opens each buff-colored envelope with untrembling hands, and scans the newspaper columns with unblenching eyes. No tidings can be evil to him; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

But does not the Christian suffer anguish and pain, as others do? Is he stoical and unimpassioned, dull in his emotions, unsympathetic in his affections? Not so; but he refuses to judge things by their appearances. He knows that all things must be working for good on his behalf: in the hieroglyphics he detects his Father's handwriting; in the mysterious figure standing on the shore, veiled in morning mist, he beholds the Lord who died for him. If tidings were to come to you to-day of disease, loss, bereavement, death, they could not be evil if your heart dares to maintain a fixed trust in God; for such trust robs death of its sting, and the grave of its victory. I cannot understand, but I can trust *Him*. Like the fabled philosopher's stone, faith turns all metals to gold.

“Know well, my soul, God's hand controls
Whate'er thou fearest;
Round Him in calmest music rolls
Whate'er thou hearest.”

He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Psa. cxiii. 9.

THIS is an evident reference to Hannah's psalm of thanksgiving, when she had born Samuel, and God had taken away her reproach. Her story, and these words, should be a great comfort to those who have never been used in soul-winning. Remember, too, how Sarah received strength by faith to bear a child, because she counted Him faithful that promised. God can make barren souls authors of life to thousands. These are the conditions:—

Be content, like Hannah, to cherish a sorrowful spirit. Weep before the Lord. Let your request be poured out before God at Shiloh, with the moving lips, though the voice be inaudible. Ask of God with strong cryings and tears, that He would still the taunts of your adversary. Souls are only born to those who cannot live without them.

Next, look away from all creature help to God's faithful promise, and believe that He can make you to become spiritually productive. Claim this of Him. Believe that of stones, He can raise up children. Hold Him to His own word. Remind Him of His promise. "I will make thee exceeding fruitful."

Hannah promised that her child should be given to the Lord; and Samuel, when old enough, was brought to the Temple in pursuance of her vow. We are too apt to take the glory and credit of soul-winning, instead of acknowledging that, as we could not bear them apart from God, so we may not keep them when they are given. Those who, like Hannah, give their Samuels to God, like her can also break forth and sing, "My heart exulteth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord; because I rejoice in Thy salvation."

Which turned the flint into a fountain of waters.
Psa. cxiv. 8.

THIS is a miracle which we all need to have wrought in our experience. Our heart is flint, our eyes are dry, our souls fail to respond with tears and regrets to the love of the Pierced One, and to the indictment that charges us with His death. There is little brokenness of heart among God's children; and it is a sad fact that conviction of sin is a comparatively rare experience among the ungodly. This used not to be so. We have read of whole communities being swept with paroxysms of grief and compunction under the preaching of a Finney. His look on one occasion at a scoffing girl smote her to the soul, and led to so deep a work of grace that a whole factory, and then a village, were filled with mourning. I was told of a revival breaking out in a church, and many hearts being made soft because a band of godly elders confessed their unfaithfulness and shortcomings.

Moses *struck* the rock of flint at the commencement of the wanderings; and was to *speak* to it, at their close. But in either case the effect was identical; the water gushed from its heart of rock. Use Thy cross, O Son of God, Lord of the House in which Moses was but a servant, and smite these hard hearts, that tears may flow freely forth; or speak the word. It is said that every building has a chord, to strike which makes it tremble to its base. Surely there is a chord, a note, a tone, before which our hearts would rend, giving Him tears for His sorrow, anguish for His pain!

“The sacrifices of God are a broken heart: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.”

“A broken heart, a fount of tears,
Ask, and it shall not be denied.”

They that make them shall be like unto them.

Psa. cxv. 8. (R. V.).

THAT men become like their ideals is a commonplace; and that the heathen resemble their deities is notorious. Men first impute to their deities their own vices, as the Greeks and Romans to the gods and goddesses of their Pantheon; and then endeavor to honor them by imitation.

But, in another sense, this is gloriously true of our relation to the Lord Jesus. If we make Him our ideal, and trust Him with all our hearts, His beauty shall dawn upon our face, and we shall be changed into His image, from glory to glory. We know that when He shall be manifested finally we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; and, in a measure, this process of transformation is taking place in those who see Him by the eye of faith, and are becoming like Him.

We are doing more by our life than by our words. We cannot always speak for Jesus, but we may always live for Him. Of a young girl, lately gone forth as a missionary, who cannot speak a word of the language of the foreign land to which she has gone, I was told the other day that her life, or rather the life of Jesus in her, was exerting a far wider influence than she knew. This is the Divine method: look and live; trust and be transfigured; abide in Him, and He shall abide in you.

Auskar, a missionary to the Scandinavians in the ninth century, when asked if he could perform miracles, replied: "If God were indeed to grant that power to me, I would only ask that I might exhibit the miracle of a holy life." But this is the most difficult of all. It is easier to die once for Jesus, than to live always for Him. Yet God's grace is sufficient. He will keep us as stars in His right hand.

Then called I upon the Name of the Lord.

Psa. cxvi. 4.

WHAT could we do without the resource of prayer? When compassed with the cords of death, and held by trouble and sorrow, what help would there be for us who eschew the methods of self-deliverance which the men of the world do not scruple to employ, if we might not betake ourselves to our knees?

“Nay, but much rather let me late returning,
Bruised of my brethren, wounded from within,
Stoop with sad countenance and blushes burning,
Bitter with weariness and sick with sin.

“Straight to Thy presence get me and reveal it,
Nothing ashamed of tears upon Thy feet;
Show the sore wound, and beg Thine hand to heal it;
Pour Thee the bitter, pray Thee for the sweet.”

Only let us never forget the immense importance of those five great “ifs” :—

John xv. 7, which touches our life in Him, and His in us, in unremitted fellowship.

Matt. xviii. 19, which touches our life with others, that must be clear as crystal.

Matt. xvii. 20, which concerns the vigor and health of our own soul-life.

1 John v. 14, 15, which demands that we know God well.

John xiv. 14, which winnows out from prayer all that is inconsistent with the name of Jesus.

Oh for the deep-dwelling life, spent in the secret place, where earth's voices grow faint, and God's clear. Such a life is a perpetual appeal to God's nature for succor—an appeal which awakens an instant response. “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee; and will shew thee great things, and fenced in, which thou knowest not.”

Oh, praise the Lord, all ye nations !

Psa. cxvii. 1.

THIS is an unwonted summons from Jewish lips. For the most part the Jews looked with little sympathy on their Gentile neighbors, and had no desire that they should laud Jehovah, save as they became proselytes of Judaism. But where the love of God is strong in the heart, it overleaps the bounds of custom and racial prejudice, and yearns that all the world should know and love the Saviour.

“If all the world my Saviour knew,
Sure all the world would love Him too.”

We all need more of the emancipating power of the love of Christ, to thaw the icy chains that hang around us, and bid words flow freely from our lips to those whom we had been accustomed to look on as outside the range of our influence. Oh for the passionate desire that God should be universally praised and loved ! Oh to be willing to be accounted fools and enthusiasts, if only we may start to praise, lips that otherwise had remained sealed and dumb ! Are we doing all we can to kindle the nations to praise ? They cannot praise Him whom they do not know. It is mere hypocrisy to bid them praise Him, if we have never sought to spread, by lip or gift, the mercy and truth revealed in Jesus our Lord. Oh that each might ponder the paradox !—

“Christ, alone, can save this world ;
But Christ cannot save this world, alone.”

What a lesson is given us by Lough Fook, a Chinese Christian, who, fifteen years ago, was so touched with the condition of the coolies in Demerara, as to sell himself into slavery that he might win them for Christ. He was the means of two hundred joining the Church before he died, five years afterward.

Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

Psa. cxviii. 27.

IS not this altar His Cross? Shall we not ask to be *bound* to it, that we may never be able to start back from our attitude of consecration? There are times when life is full of roseate light, and we choose the Cross; at other times, when the sky is grey, we shrink from it. It is well to be *bound*. Wilt Thou bind us, most blessed Spirit, and enamor us with the Cross, and let us never leave it? Bind us with the scarlet cord of redemption, and the golden cord of love, and the silver cord of Advent-hope: so will we not go back from it, or wish for another lot, than to be the humble partners with our Lord in His pain and sorrow.

The horns of the altar invite thee. Wilt thou come? Wilt thou desist from the thinking, speaking, and willing of thine own selfhood? Wilt thou place the Cross between thyself and the world that entices thee? Wilt thou dwell ever in a spirit of resigned humility, and give thyself to continual repentance and tears? Wilt thou love the Cross of our Lord Jesus and the contempt of the world, and take them as thy meat and drink? Then thou shalt know the life that passes through death, and is life indeed.

How precious are the last lines that David Livingstone penned in his diary, before his boys found him kneeling beside his bed, dead, though in the attitude of prayer, the candle burning beside him: "My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All; to Thee I again dedicate myself." So bind each of us with the cords of love, and the bands of a man.

Remember Tholuck's motto, which was adopted by Count Zinzendorf: "I have one passion, and it is He—only He."

Teach me Thy statutes.

Psa. cxix. 12.

THIS petition occurs many times in the course of this psalm. It is urged on many pleas: because God is blessed, and therefore must want to lift us to share His blessedness; because the suppliant desires to complete the declaration of God's ways to others; because he is eager to turn them into songs; because the earth is so full of Divine mercy; because God is good, and does good. Take this petition as your guide, and follow it through the psalm, and especially trace that recurring word *statutes*, and you will see how the whole of this splendid ode crystallizes around it.

There is a heavenly wisdom, which can only be acquired from the lips of the Greatest of Teachers, at whose feet Mary sat. It is not to be acquired by the intellect, but by the heart. It will never come by emulation, ambition, or pride; but to those who live a life of perfect love, of deep humility, and of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Sometimes the pupil wearies of the lesson. Winsome as the Teacher is, the bench is hard, and the horn-book difficult. Outside, the summer land attracts with scent of flower, hum of bee, and frisking squirrel. Yet God loves us too well to let us off till our lesson is learned. He often turns it back. But some day these statutes shall become our songs in the house of our pilgrimage.

When Elizabeth Fry died at sixty-five, after such a life of Christian philanthropy as few have ever known—for half a century she had been able to affirm that she had never awakened from her sleep, in sickness or in health, by day or by night, without her first waking thought being, "How best may I serve my Lord?"

Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar. Psa. cxx. 5 (R. V.).

IT is a bitter experience to have to live where there is no sympathy, but carping criticism and incessant innuendo. A pure-minded friend was recounting to me the other day the anguish he suffered perpetually, because his associates, knowing how acutely he suffered from the least suggestions of impurity, chose to assault his ears continually with abominable expressions. There are souls which have long had their dwelling with those that hate peace. To their least sigh war is the immediate response.

O lily among thorns, this is no new experience! Thy Lord hath been through these paths before thee; see the bent twigs which prove that He has passed this way. But thy loneliness can never be quite as sorrowful as His, for thou hast always Him. And remember, there is a compensation, in that the strict scrutiny of thy foes makes thee ever so much more watchful and prayerful, and drives thee oftener to the bosom of God. One declared to me lately that he had found it easier to live a holy life in a City warehouse than in a Divinity college. Perhaps we gain much more than we know from jealous opposition and criticism.

“Oft in Life’s stillest shade reclining,
In desolation unrepining,
Without a hope on earth to find
A mirror in an answering mind,
Meek souls there are who little deem
Their daily strife an Angel’s theme.”

But as the saintly Samuel Rutherford wrote: “The Cross of Christ is the sweetest burden that I ever bore: it is such a burden as are wings to a bird, and sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my desired haven.”

Shall I lift up mine eyes unto the mountains ?

Psa. cxxi. 1 (marg.).

IT is not high enough to look to mountains. They are deeply rooted and permanent in their sockets. They rise like the pillars of heaven. Rivulets gush from their sides, vineyards drape their terraced slopes, eternal snows cap them with crowns of unsullied purity. The ancients thought that the gods had chosen them for their home, as on Parnassus or Olympus. To their towering steps the eyes of their votaries were often directed to catch the first symptoms of descending help.

But the psalmist forbears to look to soaring mountains for his help. He lifts his eyes above and beyond, to the Lord which made heaven and earth. Thence shall his help come.

We are all tempted to look at the mountains, to the creature rather than the Creator; to wealth, talent, or influence; to things and people beneath the heavens, instead of to Him who dwells above the heavens, in His infinite majesty, and to whom all power is given in heaven and earth.

O unslumbering Keeper! O sleepless Watcher! Shade from heat, shelter from cold, protector from assault, transformer of ill to good, escort when we go out, home when we return! Thou art the complement of our need. We are content to suffer the loss of all things, to find them all in Thee. And therefore we betake ourselves to Thy shadow till life's calamities be overpast.

“Nor can the vain toil cease,
Till in the shadowy maze of life we meet
One who can guide our aching, wayward feet
 To find Himself, our Way, our Life, our Peace!
In Him the long Unrest is soothed and stilled;
Our hearts are filled!”

For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Psa. cxxii. 8.

WHAT the earthly Jerusalem was to the Jews, that the holy Church, the Bride of the Lamb, the heavenly Jerusalem, which descends from God out of heaven, and includes within its limits all holy souls, is to us. Let us pray for its peace and prosperity; let us esteem them above our own good, and let us be glad if our feet stand within its gates.

When the tribes of the Lord go up to give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness, let us go with them. We may be alone in some distant land, or traversing the ocean in the swift steamer, bearing us from the land of religious observances, or confined to the sick chamber: but let us never forget that we belong to the holy mystical Church; let us ascend the staircases of prayer and praise; let us mingle our rivulet of adoring love in the mighty torrent that is setting in toward the throne of God and the Lamb; for we come to the City of God, to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than Abel's. Wherever my brethren meet, in whatever section of the Church on earth, so long as they belong to the one Church, the Body of Christ, nothing shall stay me from wishing them prosperity and peace. They may not recognize me here, but five minutes in Heaven will do away with all these earthly estrangements.

When the Church is at peace within herself, she flourishes best. "So the Church," we are told, "throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, had peace, and was edified." Peace is the condition of up-building and multiplication: but it is only consistent with Truth and Righteousness. First Righteousness, then Peace, then Prosperity.

*Unto Thee do I lift up mine eyes, O Thou that
sittest in the heavens.* *Psa. cxxiii. 1 (R. V.).*

THESE exquisite Songs of Ascents, prepared for the bands of worshippers as they went up from distant parts of the land to the great annual festivals, are very precious to pilgrim-souls, as from many lands and ages they are gathering home to the throne of the exalted Lamb, who sits at the right hand of God the Father in the highest heavens. And as we journey, we lift up our eyes to His dear face—the face that once was wet with tears and dewed with bloody sweat, but which ere long will shine as the morning when He is anointed with the oil of joy above His fellows. Here is the Old Testament counterpart of the New Testament attitude—looking off unto Jesus.

The slave at the table kept the eye steadfastly fixed on the hand of master or mistress, to obey its least sign and to make it needless to speak. Keep your eye on the pierced hand, child of God; watch its smallest indication; wait patiently until it give some sign. We have too long acted on our own initiative; let us wait on our exalted Lord for the indication of His will. Let us not look askance at the proud, with their contempt, or on the heaving billows of the world's restless strife; but away to those azure depths and beyond, far above all principality, power, might, and dominion, where God hath exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour. Let His least gesture be our law.

One day we shall follow the direction of our eyes. Whilst we gaze, we shall be changed; and as we are changed we shall arise to sit with Him on His throne.

“Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far
Through all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, Thy bride—a glittering star
In raiment white and clean!”

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side.
Psa. cxxiv. 1.

HERE is an *If* which cannot be an *if*. It is never a matter of uncertainty whether the Lord will be on our side or not. For the Lord Jesus in His incarnation and death has taken His place beside us forevermore. He is always on our side, so long as we keep His paths and walk in His ways.

“Though unperceived by mortal sense,
Faith sees Him always near,
A Guide, a Guardian, a Defence ;
Then what have you to fear ?”

There are in all human lives hours of overpowering anxiety, when we feel as though it were impossible to live another moment—exposed to danger, separated from dear ones, not knowing what an hour may bring forth. Then, as you look up, you find that the Lord is beside you, sharing your anxieties, and affording you His inviolable protection. You cannot descry Him by the eye of sense, but you know Him to be there, and neither man nor devil can prevail against you.

When we look back on life, as the psalmist does here, we become aware of the myriad instances of Divine protection. We were not so vividly conscious at the time; we might even have had fits of depression and counted ourselves bereft. But if we narrowly consider the perils from which we have been rescued, when we were about to be swallowed up quick, we become convinced that He was there. In life and death and judgment, Jesus, your Advocate, will ever stand at your side and silence all who would condemn. So that with good courage you may say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: what shall man or devil do unto me !”

“*Cast all your care on God! That anchor holds !*”

The Lord is round about His people.

Psa. cxxv. 2. }

IT is a beautiful conception. Around the chosen city the mountains stood like sentinels, leaving no part without its barrier. So is God around us, and this enables us to understand how His permissions may become His appointments. It is easy to accept pain and disappointment which come to us direct from His hand; but not so when they approach us from the plotting and malevolence of a Judas or Shimei. It is impossible, however, to arrive at a settled peace, so long as we make a distinction between the afflictions which come to us from the Divine, and those which visit us from the human; and, indeed, the distinction is untenable. For the assaults of our foes are at least permitted by God, and His permissions are His appointments.

This will become evident, if we clearly apprehend that God is round about us, as a rampart to the city, as an envelope to a letter, as the atmosphere to the configuration of our bodies. If then He chooses, He can pass off from us any arrow that might harm us; but if He opens His environing protection, so as to let it pass through to us, by the time it has traversed the atmosphere of His care, it has become His will for us. Put God between yourself and everything. Many put their anxieties between them and God, and see God as the sun through a fog; mind that you put God between yourself and the entire world of men and things.

In a city on the Continent the custodians keep the regalia without iron bars, on what seems to be an open table—but none would dare to touch one jewel, for all around a powerful stream of electricity is perpetually being poured. Invisible, but potent! Such is the encompassing presence of God.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

Psa. cxxvi. 5.

SOME husbandmen steep their seeds before they sow them. It is well when Christian workers steep their lessons and addresses with their prayers and tears. It is not enough to sow; we may do that lavishly and constantly, but we must add passion, emotion, tender pity, strong cryings and tears, if the second half of the text is to be fulfilled, and we reap in joy.

But what a promise is here! You have sown long and patiently among young or old, sometimes to the point of giving all up in despair; but to give up now would be to miss the harvest and guerdon of all your toils. Be patient, persevere a little longer. God guarantees the harvest. He says, "You *shall* reap; you shall *doubtless* come again, bringing your sheaves." Even though you were to die, without reaping, yet in another world you would come again, bringing your sheaves.

We are all sowing tears—tears over our darling Absaloms, tears over our failures and mistakes, tears over our disappointed hopes. But each tear overflowing from a consecrated soul is a seed-germ dropped into God's keeping, and it shall have its reward. He carefully gathers up our tears for His bottle. God is not unrighteous to forget. He guards the buried seed, and stands sponsor for the harvest. No sigh, no tear, no prayer, inspired by the Spirit of God can positively be lost or unproductive. Like your Lord, you shall yet see of the travail of your soul, and be satisfied.

"For while the tired wavelets, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main."

He giveth unto His beloved in sleep.

Psa. cxxvii. 2 (R. V., marg.).

ALL day long we may have been fretting and fuming, running hither and thither, and doing our little best to build the house and keep the city. Sometimes we have turned to look to our faith, to see if that were in good condition, and sometimes to our friends. But we have not done much to forward matters. The weight of our anxiety is unrelieved, the heavy load presses still. Finally we can hold up no longer; with one last helpless look to God we fall back on His everlasting arms, and sleep. We rest long and deeply, till morning taps at the window. We spring up relieved; the storm has ceased, and there, beside us, given whilst we slept, is the boon we have craved and yearned for. It has been given unto His beloved in sleep.

What an emblem of death! We may have been fretting and worrying all our life, have attempted much and done little, have questioned God's love and care; then, tired and heartbroken, we shall fall asleep on the bosom of Christ, and awake to find the house built, the New Jerusalem set up, with her gates of pearl and walls of jasper, and the kingdom of God come.

Begone, dull, worrying care! let me rest; sweet Faith and Hope, close mine eyes and still my heart; Jesus, give me sleep, and in sleeping give me my heart's desire, that I may awake and be satisfied. Curtained by eternal mysteries, guarded by angel watchers, resting on the lap of mother earth, our bodies (though not our souls) shall sleep until the sounding of the Archangel's trump announce the advent of the new heavens and earth, and we shall awake, like belated sleepers, to find that God has been bringing redemption as we slept.

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord.

Psa. cxxviii. 1.

THE special phase of blessedness here, is that of the home life. The Jews have always been distinguished for this. A recent writer, describing the Jews of the middle ages, says: "The sanctity of the home was an affectionate tradition, linking them with a golden chain to their fathers before them; and amidst the degradation heaped on them, they were emancipated in at least one spot on earth, and learned from their domestic peace to look with pitiful rather than vindictive eyes upon their persecutors."

Our religious life, when it is genuine, will always cast a halo of blessedness on the home. Not lightly does Wordsworth blend "the kindred points of heaven and home," for the man who fears God brings heaven into his home. We must not be sullen or self-absorbed there. We must divest ourselves of business cares and anxieties; of irritation and fretfulness; of the brooding clouds that have gathered on our faces; we must carefully maintain the courtesies of home, and be our sweetest, gladdest, loveliest selves.

What a charming cluster of images! The wife as a vine twining round the carved trellis work of the inner court of the Oriental home—as though the woman gives the rich wine of life, which is love, as well as shadowing fertility and graceful beauty; whilst children as olive plants are sources of perennial joy. Would you have such a home? Its key-stone is the fear of grieving the Spirit of God.

"The work and watching will be very sweet
Even in an earthly home,
And in such an hour as you think not
He will come."

Many a time have they afflicted me : yet they have not prevailed against me. *Psa. cxxix. 1, 2.*

WHAT a wonder it is that Satan and man do not prevail against the saint ! There is no way of accounting for it, except in God's election. Because God has chosen us for Himself, and redeemed us at great cost, He cannot afford to hand us over to the will of our enemies. He may allow our backs to be furrowed by the heavy scourge, because the servant must be as his Lord ; but He will cut our cords in the day selected for our execution, and let us go free from the hand of our foes. So it was with Peter, and many a time with Paul.

Let us then walk with God. Fellowship with Him should be the daily bread of our souls. If we cultivate the fresh sense of fellowship with Him, we shall not yield to fear, be our foes never so venomous and their plans never so insidious. A close walk with God is the sure way of escaping them. "The man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place ; and the king of Israel sent to the place that the man of God told him and warned him of ; and he saved himself not once nor twice."

This daily fellowship is only possible through the blood of Jesus, by which we draw nigh unto God ; and it can only be maintained by constant watchfulness in little things. "Let us be very zealous over ourselves for the Lord, watching against the least shyness between the soul and Himself. Where there is much love between friends, a cold look is a matter of complaint." When least inclined to pray, we need to pray the more. When least conscious of Christ's nearness, we need to be most eager, like the old covenanter, to wrestle for access. If the King have not sent for thee these many days, await Him in His court.

There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.

Psa. cxxx. 4.

YES, thank God, there is forgiveness, because at His right hand *He* liveth forevermore who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Forgiveness at any moment for the sins of a life; repeated forgiveness for the sins of every hour; forgiveness instantaneously upon confession. He pardoneth and absolveth all those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe in Him of whom the Gospel speaks. And when God once speaks forgiveness, it can never be unspoken. Fear and doubt and misgiving may question, but cannot revoke it. Based on the Blood of the Covenant, on promises ratified by the most solemn assurances, there is irrevocable forgiveness with God. Weary, sinning, ashamed soul, the fountain of God's forgiveness springs perennially from His heart; as clear and full as when that fountain was first opened for sin and uncleanness. Take it and go your way. Even if there be no rush of emotion, or sense of pardon, yet dare to believe that your cries and tears and confessions have been heard and answered.

Just because God is so ready to forgive, there is wrought within our hearts an ever-deepening dread of giving Him pain. There is forgiveness with Him, *that* He may be feared. There is a greater fear in the heart of the true child of God of grieving his Father than there is in the unregenerate of the penalty of transgression. The element of fear comes back into our nature, refined and purified through the fires of love. There is no fear in love; and yet love fears with a perpetual dread of giving needless pain. Because God is a consuming fire of tender love, let us serve Him with godly fear.

“What is *thy* fear, O soul? The fear of that dark place,
Or fear to lose the joy of thy Creator's face?”

Like a weaned child with his mother.

Psa. cxxxi. 2 (R. V.).

HOW much the greatest teachers of the world have learned from little children ! Jesus has forevermore set a little child in the midst of us to teach us. It is from the nursery that David got this tender, exquisite conception.

A tender babe has been brought up by the breast and has loved to nestle to its mother. But the weaning time has come. With Orientals it is often greatly deferred. The little one is impatient of the change, and highly resents the spoon with which he is fed. Vehemently he cries, and fights, and struggles with hand and foot, little knowing that he is resisting a change which is to make him independent, which shall advance his truest life, and shall ultimately bring him back to that mother again, as her stay and blessing. Finally, however, the passion subsides, the sobs die down to little whimpers, a tear still lies upon the cheek to show where the storm had raged ; but on the whole the babe is stilled and quieted.

So with us, we have been clinging to the breast of some human help and comfort. Presently the strong, wise hand of God puts us gently from it, and turns us to other sources of consolation. At first we passionately resist with outcry and strife. But the Comforter comes and hushes us as on the very lap of God. He shows us the love which cannot mistake, and, at last, the soul calms, becomes stilled and quieted ; with chastened hope it turns to the Lord ; it thrives on stronger meat ; it leaves behind the life of dependence, and is strengthened with all might unto patience and long-suffering with joy. No longer satisfied with milk, it partakes of strong meat, with exercised sense (Heb. v. 11-14).

Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions.

Psa. cxxxii. 1.

THIS psalm commemorates the removal of the Ark to the Temple, newly prepared for its reception by Solomon. David had been dead some years; but as they prepared to fulfill the project on which he had set his heart, the men of the new generation could not forget how he swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob. They remembered David. Throughout this psalm his name often recurs. "For Thy servant David's sake." "The Lord hath sworn unto David." "The budding of David's horn."

"Shall man remember, and shall God forget?" He would be unrighteous if He were to forget the work of faith and labor of love of His saints. It was in pursuance of His covenant with David that Solomon's temple at last stood complete. Thus God still bends over the scenes of the life-work of His children. The chapel where a McCheyne pleaded with his congregation; the South Sea Island, where a Williams poured out his blood; the dark forests in which a Brainerd wrestled for his Indians; the great Continent, where a Moffat, a Livingstone, a Hannington wrought, prayed, and suffered. He remembers David and all his afflictions. He recalls the prayers, and tears, and travail of soul; and the time comes when the finished structure stands on the site which to them was waste and void. No effort, nor cry, nor prayer of thine goes unheeded. All that thou hast truly desired, purposed, lived for, prepared for, shall yet take shape, and greet thee. There can never be one lost good. Some day a perfect realization of thy dream, which thou shalt descry from heaven's standpoint of vision, will satisfy thee.

It is like the precious oil upon the head.

Psa. cxxxiii. 2 (R. V.).

BROTHERLY love binding together kindred hearts is here compared to oil, the chosen symbol of the Holy Spirit, because it is only through His grace that it is possible to love. The love of the brethren is the earthly manifestation of love to God. We have just as much to Him as we have to them; and such love, whether to them or Him, can only be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. Is love wanting? Seek a baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost meant the most wonderful manifestation of love which the world had ever seen.

The Holy Spirit, as oil, was poured upon the head of our great Aaron as He arose from the waters of baptism, and again when He ascended into the presence of His Father; and it has been descending ever since upon us who are as the skirts of His garments. To the Jew it seemed as though the Hermon range overtopped the land and was able to drop its dew across the intervening distance upon the mountains of Zion. Thus, from the glory of His exaltation Jesus drops the dew of the Holy Spirit as blessing upon the lowlands of our life—that blessing which is life forevermore. Our response to it should be the fertility of our heart's and life's activities.

“Ye have,” said the apostle, “an unction (anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” Could that assertion be made of us? If not, let us seek it. “He that stablisheth unto Christ, and anointeth, is God.” “Serve your God day and night faithfully,” says Dr. Goodwin; “walk humbly, and there is a promise of the Holy Ghost to come and fill your hearts. Sue this promise out; wait for it. Rest not in believing only, there is a further assurance to be had.”

Bless ye the Lord, all ye which by night stand in the house of the Lord.

Psa. cxxxiv. 1.

THIS hymn was composed for the night-watch of the Temple, for those that had gone to relieve the Levites who had been in charge during the day. It is to be noticed that these were specially summoned to bless the Lord and lift up their hands. For, after all, is it not they that stand in the house of God *by night* who are most in need of these exhortations? It seems to us that the sleepless sufferers among us are God's night-watch. When the busy workers are slumbering, they come on duty to bless the Lord, and to seek His blessing on the work of the past day, and the coming one.

It is comparatively easy to bless the Lord in the daytime, when sunshine lies like His smile on nature, and all the world is full of music, and our lives flow on quietly and peacefully. It does not take much grace to bless the Lord then. But when night has draped the earth and hushed the homes of men to solitude, and we stand amid the shadows that lurk around us in the sanctuary, facing the inexplicable mysteries of Providence, of history, of life and death; then the song falters on our lips, and chokes our utterance.

No sooner, however, do we dare to formulate the words of blessing, pursing our lips in the effort, daring to say, by the strong effort of will, what we may not say gladly and easily, there comes back to us, as to this ancient singer, the assurance that the Lord which made heaven and earth shall bless. Is it possible for Him to have made heaven and earth, and not to be able to bless the soul whom He has not created only, but redeemed! He cannot fail to bless those that bless. Indeed, their hearts, like sounding boards, but reflect to Him His own.

Praise Him, O ye servants of the Lord.

Psa. cxxxv. 1.

HERE is an appeal to all of us. *We* are His servants, *we* stand in His courts; let us praise Him. There is a distinction between thanksgiving and praise. In that, we render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at His hands; in this, we adore God for all that He is in Himself. Forgetting our own petty interests and concerns, our *me* and *my* and *mine*, we take our stand with angels and archangels and all the host of heaven in crying, Thou art worthy, O holy, holy, holy Lord! Heaven and earth are full of Thy great glory. Glory be unto Thee, O God Most High!

We praise Him with our ascriptions of loyal affection, but we praise Him no less when we suffer silently according to the will of God; when we do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word; and when we wait for Him to indicate His will, or lead us by a right way.

Oh that life might be one long psalm of praise! Awake my soul, awake psaltery and harp, awake all that is within me! Shall angels praise Thee, my God, and shall I be dumb! Shall song awake to Thee from every copse and bower, from woodland and grove, from the heart of awakening nature, and shall I hold my peace! I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I worship Thee, I magnify Thee, most loving, most holy, most blessed God; my Father, my Redeemer, my Comforter! Every whit of my nature cries, Glory! That Thy hand seems to lie heavily on me, and that my soul is pressed and straitened from without, shall not stay me. Yea, if it should be my lot to go from the courts of Thy house to the nethermost abyss, I would still ask for grace to fill its unaccustomed spaces with adoring songs!

His mercy endureth forever.

Psa. cxxxvi. 26.

TWENTY-SIX times in this Psalm we are told that God's mercy endureth forever. The psalmist had been reviewing the history of the past. As far back as the creation his eye had travelled, and all through the stormy, troublous days he could detect the silver thread of mercy. Oh that we had his eyes to see always the love of God! Amid the murky gloom of chaos there is a silver gleam; it is His mercy. When sun and moon appear, there is a brighter light than theirs; it is His mercy. Above the roar of the Red Sea and the rattle of the thunderstorms, are the flute-like notes of His mercy. Through all the strife and horror of the conquest of Canaan there glides the white-robed angel of His mercy. Deeper than the darkest shades of sin, higher than the highest floods of transgression, is the love of God, in the hand of which the round world and all its inhabitants lie, as a drop on the palm. Look back on your life, and say whether you cannot see the thread of mercy linking all its beads.

“A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy we sing.”

And do you suppose that such mercy is going to fail you? It endureth forever! You fret and chafe like a restless little child; but you cannot fall out of the arms of God's mercy. Lie still, it canopies you like a mother's face; it breathes about you as a mother's embrace. O love that will not let us go! O mercy that hath neither beginning nor end! O God, who hast loved, who lovest, and who wilt love, when the sun is no more, and the things that are now shall have passed away as a dream! O grace of God, exceeding in Thy abundance the highest mountains of our sin!

*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? *

Psa. cxxxvii. 4.

THE Hebrew singers were famous far beyond the limits of Israel. It is not surprising, therefore, that their captors asked of them the songs of Zion, little weening that there was an insuperable incongruity between those holy songs which were associated with the Temple service, and the strange surroundings of idolatrous Babylon. The Lord's song does not befit the strange land. How true this is of the minstrelsy of the heart! Chide it though you may for its silence, it must remain dumb so long as you are carried captive by the powers of evil.

You have ceased singing lately. The joy of your religious life has vanished. You pass through the old routine, but without the exhilaration of former days. Can you not tell the reason? It is not because your circumstances are depressed, though they may be; for Paul and Silas sang praises to God in their prison. Is not disobedience at the root of your songlessness? You have allowed some little rift to come within the lute of your life, which has been slowly widening, and now threatens to silence all. And you never will be able to resume that song until you have put away the evil of your doing, and have returned from the land of the enemy.

The return from Babylon has its duplicate in many a life. In answer to prayer our captivity is turned again as the stream from the south. Delivered out of the land of strangers, we again take up the harp of praise. "The Lord's song" is often more in the heart than on the lips. Remember Jonathan Edward's description of the lady who afterward became his wife, whose mind was filled with exceeding sweet delight, and seemed to have some one invisible always communing with her.

The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.

Psa. cxxxviii. 8.

WHAT a comfortable assurance! We often despair of ourselves. We awake to see that much on which we have prided ourselves, instead of being gold, silver, and precious stones, was mere wood, hay, and stubble. We discover, as Saul of Tarsus did, that the structure of righteousness which we have been raising is but as dross in the holy eye of God. We find ourselves falling through a bottomless pit of self-despair. Finally, we turn to the Lord Jesus, and say, What we cannot do for ourselves, and what no one can do for us, Thou must undertake. And there steals upon us the comfortable assurance that we have only to be faithful and true to His least prompting, and He will perfect.

What an argument! First, we plead the mercy of God, the patience that endures forever, never surprised, never surrendering its cherished purpose, never renouncing heart and hope, but always enduring amid rebuffs of neglect and the proud rebellion of self-will. Because Thy love is without measure or end, we believe that Thou wilt yet be conqueror, O Christ! Thou wilt have Thy way. We despair of ourselves. We hope infinitely in Thy mercy.

Secondly, we plead that we are the work of His own hands. Has He done so much, and will He not finish? Has He implanted a hunger that He will not satisfy? Has He led to the point of Pisgah vision, and will He not give the land? A mother might forsake her child, but God cannot forsake those whom He has made the subjects of His thought and care. He cannot have created within us longings and desires that reach to the Infinite, merely to tantalize. "If it were not so, I would have told you." Yes, we shall be perfected, some day, somewhere.

See if there be any way of grief in me.

Psa. cxxxix. 24 (R. v., marg.).

THE A. V. says "wicked way"; but the R. V. *marg.* gives "way of grief." We may be in a way that causes God grief, even though it is not what men might term a way of wickedness. We may be grieving our blessed Lord more than we know, substituting an ideal religious standard, or absorption in His work, or the conception which our friends persist in holding concerning us, for that direct personal fellowship with Himself, which alone is religion. Ah! how much we may have grieved the Spirit of Christ! Not always consciously. Often in pleading for us, the Lord must needs say, "Forgive; they know not what they do." But we are unwilling that His tender heart should suffer, or His face be overcast with grief, because of our waywardness; therefore we say, "Search us and know us; try us and show us the ways of grief." Be prepared for His revelations, searching and startling.

Lord, that is what we want! We have been going in ways of grief. We desire to go in the way everlasting—the way of eternal life; the way which we shall never need to retrace; the way that touches the deepest life possible to the creature. But we cannot find it for ourselves, nor even see the next step; therefore we stretch out poor, groping hands, and cry, "Lead us, as a woman may lead her blind child. We do not ask to see the distant way. Show us the next thing, and the next, and the next, till thy grief is turned to gladness." May I venture to hope that God will answer my prayer, and lead me in the way everlasting? Certainly! Not only may you hope, you must hope. It is as much your duty to hope always, and for the best things, as to look for forgiveness and grace to help in your time of need.

O God, the strength of my salvation, Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle. Psa. cxl. 7.

ALL day long the fight has waxed fierce against the hardly-pressed soldier. The very sky has seemed darkened with flights of arrows, and the enemy has raged like a tornado amid the reeds on the river's brink. The fiery darts of venomous sarcasm have been like a storm of hail, and yet the lonely warrior has not succumbed. To himself, and to all others, his escape has been marvellous. How could it be accounted for, except that an unseen shield had been around him, covering his head in the day of battle.

Ah, beloved soul, God is not only the strength of thy salvation, but He is also the covert, the panoply, the shield on which the malice of the foe expends itself in vain. Be quiet. Let not thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. There is but one matter for which thou needest to care. Always be sure that you are ranged on God's side.

As David anticipated the mischief of violent men who gathered themselves together for war, and sharpened their tongues like a serpent, it was a consolation to look back upon past deliverances. What God had done He would do again, so that the righteous might give thanks, and the upright dwell in His presence. God's covering in the day of battle makes a temple amid its tumult, and the soul dwells there as in the Divine Presence Chamber.

“O Holy Lord, who with the children three
Didst walk the piercing flame,
Help! in these trial hours, which, save to Thee,
I dare not name;
Nor let these quivering eyes and sickening heart
Crumble to dust beneath the tempter's dart!”

Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.

Psa. cxli. 5 (R. V.).

DAVID confessed his indebtedness to those who had reprovèd him. He realized how much he owed them. We ought to consider one another and have a care for each other's growth in grace. It is the duty of every true-hearted child of God to arrest another if he be erring in some way which is inconsistent with the honor of the family. We have to wash one another's feet; and may perform an inestimable benefit in graciously indicating some fly in the ointment of our religious profession.

But perhaps there is nothing which needs greater grace. We are so apt to be censorious, to lord it over the one whom we rebuke, to pride ourselves on our superiority, to be so taken up with another's life, as to miss God's best for ourselves. It is said that some persons wash the saints' feet in scalding water. David says, Let the *righteous* smite me. You cannot lift a man higher than you are. You must take the beam out of your eye before you can take the mote out of your brother's.

It needs some amount of grace also to accept reproof. The head is rather inclined to refuse it, and to take itself out of the way of the well-meaning adjusting hand. We resent interference. We do not care to be found out. But if, by God's grace, we can and do accept the smiting and reproof, we shall find that they become as fragrant oil. The fresh anointing which you seek in the morning may come not in rapt emotional experiences, but in the straight dealing of some fellow-disciple. Whenever anything is said which finds fault with you and blames you, receive it humbly and tenderly, asking whether it may not contain a message from your Father.

*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
then Thou knewest my path.* *Psa. cxlii. 3.*

OF course, God knows our path. We were created unto good works which God before prepared that we should walk in them. There is no step in your path which has not been anticipated and ordained by your Heavenly Father. See that path lying across the plain of life, now traversing deserts of sand, or climbing steeps of difficulty, or reaching across lonely steppes. Your heart faints (see R. V., *marg.*): you say, I cannot take this track; I cannot go through that experience; I cannot bear that strain. Heart and flesh fail. Then it is an infinite solace to look up into the face of the Father, and say, Before I was born, or took the first steps on this path, or essayed to meet its manifold vicissitudes, Thou knewest it; and Thou must have known that it was not too hard, and that there were resources of strength in Thyself sufficient for my day, which the emergency would bring out in a clearer manifestation.

We all have our times of being overwhelmed when the full realization of our grief, and pain, and loneliness rushes over us. The love we can never retrieve; the opportunity we can never recall. Then there is heart-break. But in such dark hours Jesus knows—knows the difficulties which you cannot explain to the dearest; the grave perplexities which you cannot share with your wisest confidant. He can allow for a hesitance, a trepidation, a shrinking back, which to others are unaccountable. He can give credit for the resolution that is sorely tested, and the faith which nearly gives out. He can take into account matters which evade the scrutiny of those who have the best opportunity of judging. What a relief to turn from them to Him, and say, I cannot tell them, but Thou knowest.

In Thy sight shall no man living be justified.

Psa. cxliii. 2.

THIS is an admission which each must make for himself. Man by nature is very willing to justify himself. The essence of the Pharisees' sin consisted in justifying themselves in the sight of men. But God knows our hearts, and that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. We need to have a deeper sense of God's holiness, and of His requirements as set forth in His holy law. We need more particular preaching and teaching. I was interested recently to hear of one who said she did not want to know of God because she did not want to know her own sinfulness. If men did know God, they would be compelled to admit their inability to be just with Him. It is our duty to force the knowledge of God on the unwilling conscience of men.

But probably what we all need as preachers and teachers is to get a glimpse of God's nature, to know what holiness is, and purity, and righteousness, as they exist in the Divine nature. We do not know the sinfulness of sin, and cannot enforce it, because we have not come in contact with the burning bliss of the Great White Throne.

We are justified by faith. Directly we are joined to Christ, we stand before the law of God clothed in His righteousness, and accepted not only as forgiven sinners, but as righteous. We know that God will never enter into judgment with us, since we were judged in our Substitute. There will be a judgment of our works, but there can be no condemnation of our persons. It is God that justifies. Who shall condemn? The Master said that the publican who only cried with downcast eyes, "God be propitiated to me, the sinner," went down to his house justified.

My . . .

Psa. cxliv. 1, 2.

NOTICE that repeated *My*. David had learned that nothing can take the place of personal dealings with God. Surely he had realized the fulfillment of his own thoughts about dwelling in the House of the Lord all the days of his life, and beholding His beauty. There is a great fear lest many of God's most earnest and devoted children may be losing sight of Jesus in these active days. We allow our work for Christ, our doctrines about Him, and our rules for becoming like Him, to intercept our view of *Him*. Too seldom do we get so near Him as to be able to talk to Him face to face; or pile word on word in our ineffectual effort to tell Him what we think of Him. One who loved much sang:—

“Jesus, Jesus, dearest Lord,
Forgive me if I say
For very love, Thy dearest name,
A thousand times a day.”

After all, it is not thoughts about Christ, but Christ Himself that we all need. To know Him in all the various aspects of His character, as Loving-kindness, Fortress, Shield, and Conqueror! Jesus can be the supply of your every need; and as the days pass, you will probably find yourself put into situations which will force you to discover in Him some new aspect, some fresh characteristics, something that would never have appeared to view, till the awful exigency had arisen. Then put out your hand and say *My*.

Always distinguish between the words *attain* and *obtain*. We can never earn His gracious help, either by prayer, or service; but we may claim, appropriate, and take. Learn to put your hand on all spiritual blessings in Christ, and say, *Mine*.

Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

Psa. cxlv. 13.

THESE words are engraven on the door of a mosque in Damascus, which was formerly a Christian church. Originally they were plastered over by stucco ; but this has dropped away, and the words stand out clearly defined. They seem to be contradicted by centuries of Mohammedanism ; but they are essentially true. Just now the kingdom is in mystery ; but soon it will be manifested.

Jesus is gone to the Father to be invested with the kingdom, as a Roman official might have gone from the provinces to Rome for his investiture on the part of the emperor as pro-consul or governor. And Daniel tells us that when He comes to the Ancient of Days, He will receive from Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him ; and His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed. It shall break in pieces, and consume all other kingdoms. The iron, clay, brass, silver, and gold, shall be broken in pieces, and become like the chaff of summer threshing-floors ; but it shall become a great mountain and fill the earth.

We are called to receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Each faithful servant is to rule over his allotted cities. We are to reign with Christ for a thousand years in this world, sharing His throne and empire. We have been made kings unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever.

“ Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss ;
Then all this earthly grossness quit,
Attir'd with stars, we shall forever sit,
Triumphing over Death, and chance, and Thee, O Time ! ”

In that very day his thoughts perish.

Psa. cxlvi. 4.

THE R. V. *marg.* gives the alternative *purposes*. And surely we all have had reason to notice the vacillation and infirmity of purpose which characterize too many of the sons of men. They promise to visit us every week, in our sickness or bereavement, but after a few months drop off. They pledge themselves to perform certain functions, but get lax, and ultimately the grass grows thick where their feet should have kept it down.

But we have most to complain of ourselves. Who among us has not bitterly to reproach himself for the evanescence of noble resolution—the dying down of earnest purpose? Too often they have been like the early dew and the morning cloud. In the day in which we made them our purposes have perished.

What is the remedy? It is suggested in those memorable words of Jesus, “The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water, springing up unto eternal life.” When once Jesus has been allowed to do His chosen work in the soul, He opens a subterranean passage to the reservoirs of eternity, along and through which the supplies from God’s own heart begin to enter and rise up within the soul. Abide in Him, and the sap of His life will suggest, renew, and reinforce, the purposes of the holy life. Rise up, O well, forever rise, within hearts that desire a fixed purpose to love God! Infirm of purpose we need never be, whilst God waits to create in us a steadfast spirit (*Psa li. 10, R. v., marg.*). We must be rooted and grounded in Him. Then will be manifest in us the fruit of the Spirit, which is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control” (*Gal. v. 22, 23, R. v.*).

*He healeth the broken in heart. . . . He telleth
the number of the stars. Psa. cxlvii. 3, 4.*

HOW wonderful that these two qualities should blend in one Being! That God tells the number of the stars is only what we should expect of Him. They are His flock, lying down on the fields of the heavens; and as a shepherd has a name for each of his charge, so has God for the stars. But that He should be able to bend over one broken heart and bind it with His sympathy and heal its flowing wounds, this is wonderful, amazing, divine.

It is said that in a healthy man the clenched fist is about the size of the heart. So in God, His might is the gauge of His mercy: His hand of His heart. The mountains of His strength show the valleys of His tenderness.

Yet surely it must be so. The stars are after all only things, great masses of matter; whilst hearts are those of living, sentient beings which He made, redeemed, and loves. *They* are the adornments of His House, whilst broken hearts are His children. Shall He have names for the one and no care for the other? This text is exquisitely illustrated in Jesus. Through Him God made the worlds; and by His pierced hands tears have been wiped and stifling sobs silenced all through the ages. Is your heart bleeding? He knows, He cares, He loves, He bends over and heals with exquisite sensitiveness and skill. Yea, the stars may fall from heaven as untimely figs; the sun burn out as an extinct volcano; but He will never cease to tend and comfort His own.

“There is no sorrow, Lord, too light
To bring in prayer to Thee;
There is no anxious care too slight
To wake Thy sympathy!”

Stormy wind fulfilling His word.

Psa. cxlviii. 8.

AS it rushes through the forest, the hurricane tears down the rotten branches, and makes way for the new shoots of the spring; and as it searches out the intricacies of the crowded alleys and courts it bears away the fever germs, and changes the atmosphere. Do not dread it, if you meet it rushing across the ocean and churning up the mighty billows on its way; know it to be your Father's strong servant, intent on fulfilling some errand on which it has been sent.

Stormy winds not unseldom invade our lives. All had been so fair and blessed with us. The south wind, blowing softly, had led us to suppose that we might make for another harbor. But not long afterward the tempestuous Euroclydon beat down on us, bearing us far out of our course, and threatening us with destruction. But even under those circumstances, dare to trust. The stormy wind cannot separate you from God; for through its mad fury His angels will visit you, His care will surround you, His purpose will be fulfilled of bearing you onward, as the Apostle was borne toward Rome, with its opportunities of witness-bearing (Acts xxvii.).

The great matter to remember is to run before the wind. Let its course be yours. Yield your will to God's will; and even though it bears you far out of your course, dare to believe that it is the quickest and best way of attaining the harbor which God has prepared. There is nothing terrible in fire, or hail, or stormy wind, when we see God behind them.

“O man! hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way,
And the billows of cloud that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day!”

The Lord taketh pleasure in His people.

Psa. cxlix. 4.

THE Lord watches us more closely than we realize. At each turn, His eye is upon us; and when we manifest some trait of obedience or devotion, it sends a thrill of pleasure through His heart. Of course our standing is always in His grace. We love only because He first loved. Our comeliness is placed on us by our King. And when we are at our best we always need the sprinkling of the precious blood. But still it is the constant teaching of Scripture that we may please God. This was the testimony borne of Enoch before his translation, and the apostle exhorts us to walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing. He tells us not to entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life, that we may please Him who hath chosen us to be His soldiers.

How well it would be if this were the aim of every day, the purpose of every sermon, the motive of every act. It were easy to be baptized in the waters of death, if only on emerging we might stand beneath the open heavens, whilst a voice said, "This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased." Let us strive for this. Let our eye be ever fixed on that beloved face, checking any act that might threaten to bedim it, prosecuting all that might bring over it a smile of loving appreciation and thankfulness.

And see how the verse closes: "He will beautify the meek with victory" (R. v., *marg.*). Not only does God take a personal interest in each step of the obedient soul, but He makes it beautiful, and leads it from victory to victory. This combination is very significant. The victorious are not always meek, and the meek do not generally seem victorious. But it is otherwise when God takes pleasure.

Praise ye the Lord ! Hallelujah !

Psa. cl. 6.

THE psalter begins with "Blessed," and ends with "Hallelujah." Obedience in walk and conduct leads to blessedness, and this culminates in rapture. The heart that does God's will in the world may not be always happy, but it is always blessed; and when patience has had her perfect work, it will break into such rapture as to need all creation to help its song to perfect and complete expression.

Your life may resemble the psalter with its varying moods, its light and shadow, its sob and smile; but it will end with hallelujahs, if only you will keep true to the will and way and work of the Most Holy.

Your estimate of the world is often pessimistic to the last point; but if you will be still, and let God finish His work perfectly, you will hear all things that have breath joining in the Hallelujah Chorus, and saying, The kingdoms of the world have become those of the Lord and of His Christ.

God is preparing the whole universe to be an orchestra of praise and adoration to His Son. On one occasion a great conductor, amidst the burst of five hundred instruments, is said to have missed the piccolo; and he stayed the entire performance till it chimed in. Nothing can satisfy God till creation's groans are changed to rapture, and the curse, which restrains her songs, is lifted from the face of all nature; but He wants to hear your voice. If you cannot praise Him in the church, praise Him in Nature, "the firmament of His power." If you cannot praise Him for His acts, do so for His excellent greatness. If not with the blare of trumpet, then with the softer lute. If not with the realization of the senses, then in the assurance of faith. Only be sure to praise Him.

Quiet from fear of evil.

Prov. 1. 33.

“WHOSO.” This promise is to us all. To the man in the street, as much as for those of us who have been nurtured in Christian homes.

The evil is taken out of things for those whose hearts are full of God. Nothing which God allows to come to us is really evil, except sin. Put away sin from your heart, and let it be filled with Love and Faith, and behold all things will become new. They will lose their evil semblance, because you will look at them with new eyes. Men talk against the March wind; but when they understand that it is cleansing foetid dens of fever-germs, they regard it as a blessing. Men dread change, anything unwonted or unaccustomed; but when they find that, like the transplanted fruit-tree, they will often attain a greater maturity than when left to one spot of soil, they welcome it. If you look at things apart from God, especially if you anticipate the future without Him, you have good cause for fear; but if you hearken to and obey Him, if you know and love Him, if you abide in God and God in you, you will see that the evil is not in the things or events, but in yourself. Give yourself as alms to God, and lo, all things will become clean to you.

Death shall lose its terrors, and become the Father's servant, ushering you into His presence. *Pain* and *suffering* shall but cast into relief the stars of Divine promise. *Poverty* will have no pangs, and storm no alarms. You shall become so habituated to find the rarest blessings associated with what men often dread most, that you will be quiet from all fear of evil, and able to look out, with serene and untroubled heart, on a sea of troubles. In fact, it is very doubtful if anything is really evil for those who love God.

If thou seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, etc. *Prov. ii. 4, 5.*

THERE is a beautiful illustration of the truth of these words in the life of Justin the Martyr, who died for the Gospel in the second century. As a young man he earnestly sought for truth, specially that which would arm him with self-control. He took up one system of philosophy after another, trying them as a man might explore mine after mine for silver. Finally, he found that every effort was futile.

“All at last did faithless prove,
And, late or soon, betrayed my love.”

At length, wandering in despair on the seashore, he met an aged man, a Christian, who spake as none had ever done to his heart, and pointed him to God in Christ. Beneath those words, that afternoon, he understood the fear of the Lord, and found the knowledge of God.

Thomas longed for evidences of the Resurrection, and Christ came to him. The Chamberlain, as he sat in his chariot reading the book of Esaias the Prophet at chapter liii., was desirous to know the truth, and Philip was sent to him. To Saul of Tarsus, groping in the midnight, there came fuller revelations than ever Gamaliel gave, through Stephen and Ananias, led by the Spirit of God.

But you must be prepared to sacrifice all. He who seeks diamonds, or pearls, or gold, will leave his native land, and what other men hold dear, and centre his whole attention on his quest. Not otherwise must it be with those who would understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. They must be willing to count all things but loss, to sell all they have, in order to buy the field with its treasure-trove.

He shall direct thy paths.

Prov. iii. 6.

THY paths! Then, every man's path is distinct for him, and for no other. The paths may lie side by side, but they are different. They have converged; they may diverge. When Peter had been told of the rugged nature of the predestined path which was marked out for him in the Providence of God, he turned toward John, his companion and friend, and said to Jesus, "What shall this man do?" The Lord instantly replied, in effect: "That is a matter in which I can brook no interference; it is entirely a matter for My choice and will; *if I will*, it may be that he shall tarry till I come."

We need to be divinely directed.—The man who stands above the maze can direct you through all its labyrinth by the readiest path. God who made thee for thy life, and thy life for thee, can direct thee, and He only.

First: *Lean not to thine own understanding.*—One is apt to pride oneself on one's far-sighted judgment. We consult our maps and guides and the opinions of fellow travellers, to find ourselves at fault. We have to learn that our own understanding is not keen enough or wise enough to direct; we must abjure and renounce all dependence on it.

Second: *In all thy ways acknowledge Him.*—Let thine eye be single; thy one aim to please Him; thy sole motive, His glory. It is marvellous how certainly and delightfully our way opens before us when we no longer look down on it, or around at others, but simply upwards into the face of Christ. "It is a universal law, unalterable as the nature of God, that no created being can be truly holy, useful, or happy, who is knowingly and deliberately out of the Divine fellowship, *for a single moment.*"

The light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Prov. iv. 18 (R. v., marg.).

THIS may be referred to the work of God in the heart. He who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. A little glimmering ray at first, God's light in the soul grows ever from less to more, revealing Himself and manifesting ourselves, so that we are growingly attracted from the self-life to circle around Him.

But probably it is true also of the graciousness of the believer's life. At first it shows itself in little acts of blessing on children and the poor; but the range of influence is always apt to increase, till what was a glimmer of helpfulness becomes as the sun shining in strength. The Sunday-school teacher becomes the preacher; the visitor among the poor becomes the philanthropist; the witness to the Gospel in the factory is called to witness in the great theatre of the world. See to it that there is a steady obedience to God's least promptings and monitions. Follow on to know the Lord, and to be conformed to His all-wise purpose.

Once again notice the comparison in its exquisite beauty. Light is so gentle, noiseless, and tender. There is no sound; its voice is not heard. So is the influence of the holy soul. Its life becomes the light of men. As with the angel over the plain of Bethlehem, it sheds a light around those whom it will presently address. Like the Gulf Stream, which changes our climate from northern rigor to the temperate zone, so a holy life gently and irresistibly influences and blesses the world. The world is no worse than it is, not because of the holy words spoken on the Lord's Day, but for the holy lives of obscure saints.

The level path of life. He maketh level all His paths.

Prov. v. 6, 21 (R. V.).

IT is a remarkable expression, "the level path of life"; and there is great comfort in knowing that God is ever before us, levelling our pathway, taking insurmountable obstacles out of the way, so that our feet do not stumble.

It may be that you are facing a great mountain range of difficulty. Before you obstacles, apparently insuperable, rear themselves like a giant wall to heaven. When you cross the Jordan there is always a Jericho which appears to bar all further advance, and your heart fails. But you are bidden to believe that there is a level path right through those mighty barriers; a pass, as it is called, in mountainous districts. The walking there is easy and pleasant if only you will let yourself be led to it. God has made it, but you must take it. How we dread the thought of those steep cliffs! It seems as though we could never climb them; but if we would only look at the Lord instead of at the hills, if we would look above the hills to Jehovah, we should be able to rest in sure faith that He will show us the level path of life.

Your path is not level, but full of boulders which have rolled down upon and choked it. But may this not be partly due to your mistakes or sins—to your willfulness and self-dependence? There are sorrows and trials in all lives; but these need not obstruct our progress. The text surely refers to those difficulties which threaten us with their arrest, putting barriers in our way. When Peter reached the iron gate he found it open; when the women reached the sepulchre door they found the stone gone. What an awful indictment against the child of sensual pleasure, "She findeth not the level path of life!"

Bind them continually upon thine heart, tie them about thy neck.

Prov. vi. 21.

IF the son addressed here is bidden to thus care for the words of his parents, how much more should we ponder those of God as given us in God's blessed Book.

When thou walkest, it shall lead thee.—There is a little circle of friends whom I know of who read this book of Proverbs through every month for practical direction on the path of life. A West-countryman said of this collection of wise words, "If any man shall maister the Book of Proverbs, no man shall maister he." Take for instance the weighty counsels of the first five verses. How many lives would have been saved from bitter anguish and disappointment if only they had been ruled by them! Let every young man also ponder the closing verses. Let us all meditate more constantly on the Word of God.

When thou sleepest, it shall watch thee.—The man who meditates on the Word of God by day will not be troubled by evil dreams at night. Whatever unholy spirits may prowl around his bed, they will be restrained from molesting him whose head is pillowed on some holy word of God. And on awakening, the Angel of Revelation will whisper words of encouragement and love.

And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.—The heart is accustomed to commune with itself about many things, but when the mind is full of God through His Word, it seems as though the monologue becomes a dialogue. To all our wonderings, fears, questionings, answers come back from the infinite glory in words of Scripture. Some wear amulets about their necks to preserve them; but the Word of God is both a safeguard and choice treasure.

Say unto Wisdom, Thou art my sister ; and call Understanding thy kinswoman. Prov. vii. 4.

THIS wisdom might seem to be too unearthly and ethereal to engage our passionate devotion, unless we remember that she was incarnated in Jesus Christ, who, throughout this book, seems forthshadowed in the majestic conception of wisdom. And who shall deny that the most attractive and lovable traits blended in His matchless character as Son of Man and exalted Redeemer.

With what sensitive purity He bent His face to the ground and wrote on the dust, when her accusers brought to Him a woman taken in the act of sin ! With what thoughtfulness He sent word to Peter that He was risen, and provided the meal for His weary and wave-drenched sailor friends on the shores of the lake ! With what quick intuition He read Mary's desire to anoint Him for the burying !

It was this combination of what is sweet in women and strong in man, which so deeply satisfied men like Bernard, Rutherford, Fénelon, and thousands more, who have been shut out from the delights of human love, but have found in Jesus the complement of their need, the satisfaction of their hunger and thirst. In Him, for them, was restored the vision of the sweet mother of early childhood ; of the angel-sister who went to be with God ; of the early love that was never destined to be realized.

Women find in Jesus strength on which to lean their weakness ; and men find in Him the tender, thoughtful sympathy to which they can confidently entrust themselves. We are born for the infinite and Divine ; earthly loves, at their best, are only patterns of things in the heavens. They are priceless ; but let us look into them and through them, to behold the unseen and eternal that lie beneath.

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. Prov. viii. 22.

THIS wisdom is not an abstract attribute or quality, but a Person. Whether the ancient writer of these glowing paragraphs realized fully what deep things he was saying when he so depicted her—as one who was brought up with the Father before the world was, as rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth with the children of men—we cannot positively determine; but we at least may lift the curtain, and see here Christ, who is both the Power and the Wisdom of God. Is it not His chosen name the Word of God?

There, in that divine Man, in His gentle love, in His deep and weighty words, in His power to give life to them that find Him, we have the highest embodiment of the wisdom of God, which was before all worlds, and yet stoops to each lowly and obedient heart. It is not enough then for us to seek knowledge and get understanding apart from Jesus; but to seek Him diligently and early, as we are bidden in ver. 17, sure that when we win Him, we shall possess all the wealth of truth and knowledge that we require for this life and the next. He is the Truth and the Life. Truth apart from Him neither nourishes nor inspires.

Would you know the wisdom of God, then be still in heart, wait before God, quieting all your soul before Him; remember that Jesus is near, waiting, longing to impart Himself. Be not content till you have pressed through the words to the Word, through the Scriptures to Him of whom they testify. His delights are with the sons of men. Nothing will fill Him with greater joy than that we should hear Him, watching daily at His gates, and waiting at the posts of His doors.

Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither.

Prov. ix. 4, 16.

TWICE over this invitation is given—first by wisdom, and secondly by the foolish woman. To every young life, in its first setting forth, many voices and inducements speak. Wise, grave voices mingle with siren songs. The strait gate into the narrow way stands side by side with the wide gate that leads into the broad way. The counsels of the fathers's lips, the tears and prayers of the mother, amid the enticements of sinners, and the blandishments of the world. Here the true Shepherd, there the hireling; here the true Bride, there the apostate Church; here that which condemns the flesh, there that which takes its side.

Life is full of choices. There is no day without them. We are perpetually being reminded of the way in which the Creator introduced lines of division into His earliest work. For it is thus that He proceeds with the work of the new creation within. Repeatedly we hear His voice as He divides the light from the darkness, calling the one Day and the other Night. Would that we ever acted as children of the Light and of the Day, choosing the one and refusing the other! We are always being exercised in this, and our best life depends on the keenness and quickness with which we refuse the evil and choose the good.

Wisdom appeals to conscience. She says nothing at the outset of the sweetness of her service, or the pleasantness of her paths; but bases her appeal on whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Yet she has rich rewards to those that choose her. Length of days, honor, a heart at leisure from itself, sure satisfaction, the assurance of the favor of God, a sure and certain hope of blessedness forevermore.

He is in the way of life that heedeth correction.

Prov. x. 17 (R. V.).

IT is a wise prayer, "Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment." Happy is the man whom God correcteth; for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth.

Sometimes God corrects us with rebukes, making our beauty to consume away as a moth before the stroke of illness or physical weakness. At other times we are corrected by the faithful rebuke of a friend, or the question of a little child. And yet again, correction comes to us through the sore discipline of having to reap the results of our sins. Some heed correction; others resist and refuse it. Many get weary of it, and for their sakes it is written, "We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?"

Do not be weary of God's correction, my chastened friend. He does not expose you to the searching trial for His pleasure; but for your profit, and that you may be a partaker of His holiness. Heed correction. Ask why it has come, and what it is designed to teach. Set yourself to learn the lesson quickly. Above all, let us heed more carefully God's Holy Word, which is profitable for correction, as well as for teaching, reproof, and instruction. How often might we have been spared the searching correction of trouble if we had allowed our lives to be pruned by God's Word!

Our behavior under correction will show whether we are in the Way of Life or not. If the Life of God be truly within us, we will meekly accept and profit by the correction, from whatever source it comes. Otherwise we will murmur and fret, till the wine becomes vinegar, and the milk sour.

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.

Prov. xi. 24.

THIS scattering is a conception borrowed from the husbandman. From out of his barns he takes the precious seed, and scatters it broadcast. The child of the city might wonder at his prodigality, little weening that each of the scattered seeds may live in a hundred more, and perpetuate itself for successive autumns.

We are bidden to measure our life by its losses rather than by its gains; by the blood poured out, rather than by its storage in the arteries of life; by its sacrifices, rather than its self-preservation; by its gifts, rather than its accumulations. He is the richest man in the esteem of the *world* who has gotten most; he is richest in the esteem of *heaven* who has given most.

And it is so ordered that as we give we get. If we miserly hoard the grain, it is eaten by weevils; if we cast it away it returns to us multiplied. Stagnant water is covered with scum; flowing water is fresh and living. He who gives his five barley loaves and two small fishes into the hands of Jesus sees the people fed and gets twelve baskets over. Tell out all you know, and you will have enough for another meal, and yet another. Set no limit to your gifts of money, time, energy; in the act of giving the whole that you have expended will return to you, and more also. Freely ye have received, freely give; freely give, and freely ye will receive. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. . . . And He that supplieth seed to the sower, and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness, ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality."

The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips.

Prov. xii. 13.

IT has been well remarked that God has set many snares in the very constitution and order of the world for the detection and punishment of evil-doers. Amongst others, is the liar's own tongue. Watch a criminal trial, and you will find abundant illustrations of this in the detection of a false witness, who makes statement after statement, which are not only inconsistent with truth, but with each other. Presently he comes to a point, where he falls into one of his own lies, which he had forgotten, and lies, floundering like a wild beast in a snare. It is impossible for a liar to imitate the severe and inflexible majesty of truth. In his endeavor to appear true, he will fall into a trap of his own setting.

But whilst the wicked goes into a snare, the righteous shall come out of trouble. It is not said that he will always escape it. Our Master clearly foretold that all lives which were moulded on the example of His own would pass through similar experiences. For them also the bitter hatred of the world, the title Beelzebub, and at last the cross. "But the just shall come out of trouble." It is not possible that we should be holden by it. We belong to Him who has come out of the great tribulation. Just now we may be following the serried ranks down into the heart of the sea, on either hand the heaped-up billows, and the stars hidden by the pale of thunder-cloud. But He who led us in will lead us out. On yonder bank we shall stand among the victors. That weary hand shall wave the victor's palm; that tired head shall be crowned with light. Listen to the voices that come from that radiant shore: Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world: and, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life.

Prov. xiii. 3 (R. V.).

WHAT we say influences others, but it has a reflex influence on ourselves. When we speak unadvisedly and impurely, we sow seeds of ill harvests not in others only, but in ourselves, and the very utterance injures us. When, on the other hand, we refuse to give expression to a wrong or unkind thought, we choke and strangle it.

Will each reader and hearer of these words carefully bear this in mind. If you express what is uncharitable or wrong, you gratify the evil nature that is in you, and you strengthen it. If, on the contrary, you refuse to express it, you strike a death-blow at the cursed thing itself. When you guard your mouth you keep your life, because you weaken that which is gnawing insidiously at the root of your life. If there is fire in a room, be sure not to open door or window; for air is its fuel and food. And if a fire is burning within you, be sure not to give it vent. What goes forth from you defiles you. Would you see good days? Refrain your lips from evil.

Perhaps you find yourself unable to guard your mouth. You are only discovering the truth of those terrible words: "The tongue is a fire, the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell. . . . The tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." If man cannot tame it, the Saviour can. Cry to Him then, saying, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." The fire of God's love will burn out the fire of hell. Hand the bridle, or rudder, as the apostle James calls it, over to Him.

"Take my lips, and let them be
Fill with messages from Thee."

A Tranquil Heart.

Prov. xiv. 30 (R. V., marg.).

IF we would have a tranquil heart, we must resolutely put from us the ambition to get name and reputation among men, to exert wider influence for its own sake, and to amass large accumulation of money. Directly we begin to vie with others, to emulate them, or compare our position and influence with theirs; directly we allow strong desires to roam unchecked through our nature; directly we live on the breath of popular applause, we are like those who step from the pier on a rocking boat—all hope of tranquillity is at an end.

“In God’s will,” Dante said, “is our peace.” When the government is on His shoulder, of its increase and of our peace there is no end. Would you have your peace flow as a river?—then rest in the Lord, be silent unto Him; fret not thyself; turn away from the things that are seen and temporal; set thy face to those that are unseen and eternal. Live in the secret place of the Most High, and hide under the shadow of the Almighty. Say of the Lord that He is thy fortress and high tower. Put God between thyself and everything. Let the one aim of thy life be to please Him, and do the one small piece of work He has entrusted thee with. Look away from all others to Him alone. And learn to look out on others with a tender sympathetic gaze, turning to prayer about them and all things else that might ruffle and sadden. Let all thy requests be made known unto God, so shall His peace keep heart and mind.

“Draw me to Thee, till far within Thy rest,
In stillness of Thy peace, Thy voice I hear—
Forever quieted upon Thy breast,
So loved, so near.”

The prayer of the upright is His delight.

Prov. xv. 8.

WE too seldom consider the pleasure that the prayer of His people gives to God. Often we go to Him with no other thought than to find relief from the pressure of anxiety or sin. We hardly realize that He is looking for our coming because He loves us. Thus nothing delights Him more than the time we consecrate for heartfelt fellowship with Him. Think, O child of God, when next the hour of prayer comes round, that God is waiting for you. Would you cause Him disappointment by curtailing it, and by passing cursorily through a form, when He looks for the fellowship of the soul? Remember how Jesus said, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him."

The prayer which gives God delight is one which is characterized thus:—(1) It must be an identification with the prayer of the Lord Jesus. In Him alone can the Father take delight, and in us only as far as we are in the Beloved, and He in us. (2) We must come in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our lives rid of all known inconsistency and impurity. (3) We must give time for God to speak to us. Rev. Andrew Murray says, "Bow quietly before Him in humble faith and adoration. God is. God is near. God is love, longing to make Himself known." (4) Lie very low before God. Sink down before Him in the lowest dust of self-abasement, reckoning yourself to be nothing. (5) Present yourself to God that He may fulfill through you His own loving purposes.

In the Book of Revelation, we are bidden to behold the Angel of the Covenant mingling much incense with the prayers of all the saints. That incense is the merit of Jesus, which makes our prayers delightful (Rev. viii. 3-5).

Roll thy works unto the Lord, and thy purposes shall be established. Prov. xvi. 3 (R. V., marg.).

THERE are four matters which we are to roll upon God—ourselves, as the Messiah in Psa. xxii.; our burden; our way; and here our works. The genesis of Christian work is on this wise. We become conscious of the uprising of a noble purpose. We are not sure at first whether it is of God or not, till we have taken time to subject it to the winnowing fan of His good Spirit. It is always wise to subject it to the fire of His criticism before it takes shape. Even then, however, all is not done. We must submit our plans before they are executed, our methods by which they are being executed, and the results of the execution, to the infinite wisdom of our Heavenly Father.

What a comfort it is to roll our works upon God! That servant of God who is carrying the responsibilities of a vast missionary enterprise! That preacher with his church and organizations! That promoter of philanthropic and ameliorative agencies! Let them roll their works upon God, and be content to take the subordinate place of acting as His agents and executors. The heart will be light, and the hands free, if only we can learn the blessed secret of imposing the responsibility and anxiety of our efficiency, finance, and success on Jehovah. Roll thy works, and see that they do not roll back again. Put on the arrest of faith to make them keep their position. Reckon that God takes what you give; and when you have let your works go, be sure to cast yourself after them on His patient carefulness. Remember that He desires to work in us to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do not worry, nor fret, nor be always looking for results. Do your best, and leave the rest to Him, who is our rearward. He will follow up your efforts and establish the work of your hands.

He that spareth his words hath knowledge.

Prov. xvii. 27 (R. V.).

THE A. V. and R. V. *marg.* suggest a better rendering, "He that hath knowledge spareth his words." It is a wise thing to say as little as possible to man, and as much as possible to God. The ultimate test of friendship has always seemed to me to be in the ability of true friends to be silent in each other's presence. In silence we best may open the heart to receive the infillings of the Divine Spirit. When people are always talking to one another, even though they talk about God, they are liable to lose the first fresh sense of God's presence.

Ordinary conversation greatly weakens character. It is like the perpetual running of a tap which inevitably empties the cistern. It seems to me disastrous when the whole of a summer holiday is spent in contact with friends, however dear, who leave no time for the communing of the soul with itself, nature, and God. We cannot be perpetually in society, speaking to the nearest and dearest, without saying things which will afterward cause us regret. We shall have spoken too much of ourselves, or too little of Christ, or too much about others; or we shall have allowed the things of the world and sense to bulk too largely. Besides, it is only in silence and thought that our deepest life matures, or the impressions of eternity are realized. If we are always talking, we give no opportunity for the ripening of the soul. Nothing makes the soul more fruitful than to leave it fallow. Who would pick a crop of fruit when first it began to appear on the trees? Live deep. Speak as little as you may. Be slow to speak, and swift to hear.

"Not seldom ceases outward speech awhile,
That the inner, isled in calm, may clearer sound."

His neighbor cometh and searcheth him out.

Prov. xviii. 17.

IT is easy to boast of what we are or are not ; but the real question is as to what others think of us. A Christian lady told me that a little time ago she went to a meeting where one after another arose to say how long they had been without sin. When an opportunity was given, she asked simply if they might be allowed to hear something from those who had lived with the persons that had been so loudly expressing themselves ; because she said that she had observed that the opinions of those who shared the same room or home as Christian professors were apt to vary greatly from those of the professors themselves.

It is a grave question for us all—what do our neighbors and associates think of us? Would they credit us with the highest attainments in Christian living? Would they concede the reality and beauty of our characters? After all, may not we be mistaking our ideals for our attainments, and judging ourselves by a lower standard than we apply to others? Might not our wives and sisters, our husbands and brothers, search us? It is so much easier to plead our own cause in a meeting than to stand clear in the searching scrutiny of the home.

And if our neighbors search us, what does God think of us as the fierce light of His eyes scans us and reads our deepest secrets? What should we do were it not for the Blood of Christ? I used to hesitate once to call myself a miserable sinner ; but as I know myself better, I begin to feel that it is a reasonable designation. That is what we are by nature, though we have been made by divine grace, children, heirs, joint-heirs with Christ. Job, the righteous man, confessed himself vile when God's light revealed him.

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord.
Prov. xix. 17 (R. V.).

WHAT a revolution would be wrought among us if we really believed this! We are glad to lend to our friends in a temporary strait, especially when we know that our money is safe and will come back to us with a substantial increase. To have an I O U is quite sufficient. But in the light of this text we are taught to look on God as the great Borrower. He comes to us, asking that we will lend to Him. In every needy one who deserves our aid the request of the Almighty may be heard asking a loan.

What mistakes we make? We think we keep what we hold and invest well. But we really keep what we give away. The best investments are the heavenly shares and stocks, which are found in the needs and sorrows of the poor. Will you not, my reader, resolve that you will begin to lend to the Lord in the person of those who need your help, whether for their personal necessities or the work in which they are interested? You are called to be a steward of God's free gifts to you. You must be ready, as His almoner, to deal out His wealth. He will pay you for doing it, by giving you your own present maintenance; and one day He will say, "I was hungry, and you fed Me; thirsty, and you gave me drink: inherit the place prepared for you."

Just ponder the magnificence of this promise: "His good deed will He pay him again." God will never be in your debt. He is exact and punctilious in His repayment. No man ever dared to do His bidding in respect to any case of need, and found himself the poorer. "Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down and running over shall they give into your bosom." Was not Ruth's love to Naomi well compensated?

The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.

Prov. xx. 27.

SEE that row of unlighted candles, standing in silver sockets, chased and wrought with wondrous skill—such are the souls of men by nature, rich in attainments and generous impulses, highly educated, perhaps, apparently fit for high and glorious work, but they have no light. They are a puzzle to themselves and others. Whilst another, who has none of their powers or advantages, casts a glow on his age, which lingers long after he has gone. He is like a common candle, but lit. The spark from God has ignited his soul.

But remember that while the candle shines with the light of God, it wastes. The slowly-dwindling length shows the amount of the inevitable expenditure. Our Lord said of the Baptist, "He was a burning and shining light." There must be burning before there can be shining; we must suffer in order to serve. It is good to know this, for it gives purpose to pain. "I cried to Thee, O Lord, and unto Thee I made supplication. *What profit* is there in my blood?" What profit! If we only knew that, the pain might be borne proudly and lightly. Oh, never dare to think of blessing men, except at a cost of blood and tears, that may seem to thee as a guttering candle, the wax of which is flowing down in trickling streams, or curling up in rugged contortions!

"Therefore, O Lord, I will not fail nor falter,
Nay, but I ask it; nay, but I desire —
Lay on my lips Thine embers of the altar,
Seal with the string, and furnish with the fire.

"Quick in a moment, infinite forever,
Send an arousal better than I pray;
Give me a grace upon the faint endeavor,
Souls for my hire, and Pentecost to-day."

The heart . . . as the watercourses.

Prov. xxi. 1 (R. V.).

MADAME GUYON says that there are three classes of souls that may be compared to rivers flowing toward God as their ocean.

1. Some move on sluggishly and feebly. These are often discouraged, dwell much in the outer and emotional, and fail to seek God with their whole strength.

2. Some proceed decidedly and rapidly. These have large hearts, and are quick in their responses to God's Spirit.

3. Some press on in headlong impetuosity.

This comparison of our hearts to watercourses filled with torrents from the hills is a very beautiful one, and is capable of great expansion.

Watercourses need fresh supplies of water from the hills : and our hearts are in constant need of freshets from the everlasting fountain of God's nature.

Watercourses must fulfill their ministry in all weathers : and we must continue patiently in faith and well-doing, whatever be our circumstances or emotions. If we fail, the whole land will be smitten with drought.

Watercourses end in merging their waters with the ocean tides : so God will one day be all in all.

Will you let God lead your heart whither He will? Just as a husbandman will cut watercourses in different directions to conduct the flow of the water, so will you not let God lead your life? You can be a watercourse: He must give the water. Only be content, like the river-bed, to lie deep hidden beneath the waters; not noticed or thanked by those that stoop to drink the refreshing draughts. It is impossible for the water to pass through you without nourishing your own soul.

Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward.

Prov. xxii. 5.

THIS is due to the love of God, shown in the constitution of the world. It would have been malignity indeed to have placed us in the world without the warning signal of pain to show us where we are wrong, and to sting us when we go astray. By the pitiful mercy of our Creator, pain is the inevitable consequence of the breach of physical and moral law; thus men are shown that they are on the wrong path, and driven back to repentance and rectitude. The Greek motto said: "Pain is therefore gain."

You say that there are many who suffer, who are among the holiest and meekest of mankind; and you wonder how it is that those snares have come so plentifully to their share. But you must remember that though an individual may not have broken the law himself in any special sense, yet he inherits broken law. By virtue of his union with a sinful race he reaps a harvest sown by others' sins; and by bearing it meekly and lovingly he enters into union with some aspects of the death of Christ, and fills up that which is behind of his sufferings. When wrong is borne sweetly and uncomplainingly, some froward deed that started long before, and had been cursing the world, is forever arrested and cancelled; as a cannon ball in a bank of sand.

But, in addition, there are some who suffer according to the will of God. Pain, beneath the touch of the Spirit of God, is in the highest degree disciplinary. As the angels watch the result on a soul of God's sharp ordeal of suffering, they say:

"The keen sanctity,
Which with its effluence, like a glory, clothed
And circled round the Crucified, has seized
And scorched, and shrivelled it."

Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

Prov. xxiii. 17.

I ASKED a working man the other day how he fared. His wife, the partner of many years, has died, and there is no one to welcome him on his return from work and prepare for him. His fellow workmen, younger men, delight in tormenting him and increasing his arduous toils, because they hate his simple godliness. A physical weakness grows upon him distressingly. But he said that he was very happy, because he lived in God. All the way along it was Jesus—Jesus when he woke in the morning; Jesus when he went to bed at night; Jesus when he wrote a letter; Jesus when he went to the butcher's shop to buy his little piece of meat for Sunday—Said he, "He made the beasts; He must know what is good to eat." And when I asked how he managed to maintain this life, he said, "I always ask Him to rouse me up early enough to have a good time in fellowship with the Master." From the way he spoke, he reminded me of the priest's portion of the shoulder and breast as symbolizing the strength and love of the Lord Jesus.

If we are in the love of God we shall be in His fear; for though perfect love casts out fear that hath torment, it introduces the fear that dares not cause needless pain to the Infinite Lover of souls. We fear to tear open His wounds again, to expose His heart to the spear-thrust, or to miss aught of His gracious pains to make us what He wants us to become.

"If ye keep My commandments," the Master said, "ye shall abide in My love." To abide in His fear is equivalent to abiding in His love. They are two sides of the same coin. Only they love who fear. The woman feared Solomon's sword, because the babe was her own.

If Thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death. . . .

Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.

CHRIST has greatly added to the convicting power of truth. Before His time men were taught that it was wrong to do wrong; but He taught that it was wrong not to do right. In the Christian church we confess that we have done the things that we ought not to have done—we do this in common with all men that acknowledge the rule of conscience. But we are taught by our Lord, and by such passages as this, to go farther, and confess that we have *not* done the things that we ought to have done. This is our great and damning crime.

The priest and Levite that did *not* go to the help of the wounded traveller; the servant who simply did *not* use the Lord's money; the nations that did *not* feed, clothe, or visit Him in the persons of the distressed; the virgins who had *not* oil in their vessels; the trees that did *not* bear—these Christ held up to shame and everlasting contempt. We cannot ignore the evil around us, and say we are not responsible for it. We cannot shut our eyes and avert our faces from wrongdoing, and tyranny, and oppression. We cannot profess that it is not our business, whosoever else's it may be, without it becoming known to the Searcher of all hearts, who will certainly reckon it against us on the day of account. *Not* to do is to incur Christ's displeasure.

What a striking illustration is afforded to these words in the Book of Esther! When the young queen was hesitating, Mordecai said very truly: "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat.

Prov. xxv. 21, 22.

THE pagan ideal of a manly life was to succeed in doing as much good to your friends, and as much injury to your enemies, as possible. A few exceptions to this rule are recorded ; but the wonder at them proves that the sentiments of forgiveness and mercy were foreign to popular morality and public opinion. How different is the teaching of the Bible ! and in this have we not an evidence of its Divine authority ? Our Lord went further even than this noble maxim ; He said, " Love your enemies, and pray for them which persecute you."

We are not taught to be entirely indifferent to the moral qualities of actions. The perception of sin and evil is necessary to a holy soul. And it is not required that we should abjure that holy resentment to wrongdoing, to which the apostle alludes when he says, " Be ye angry, and sin not." We must always resent wrong as wrong, though we must carefully eliminate any vindictive feeling toward the wrongdoer.

Do you think that others have wronged you ? Pity them ; pray for them ; seek them out ; show them their fault, humbly and meekly ; wash their feet ; take the mote out of their eye ; seek to restore them in a spirit of meekness, remembering that you may be tempted ; heap coals of loving-kindness on their heads ; bring them if possible into such a broken and tender frame of mind, that they may seek forgiveness at your hand and God's. If you cannot act thus with all the emotion you would feel, do it because it is right, and the emotion will inevitably follow. It was said of Archbishop Leighton, that to do him an injury was to secure his lasting friendship.

For lack of wood the fire goeth out.

Prov. xxvi. 20 (R. V.).

HOW simple a parable! Of course it must be so. As soon as a fire has reached the end of the material on which it fed, it expires.

This is true of the fire of slander. As long as there is an ear to receive, and a tongue to pass on, some piece of malicious slander will continue to circulate. But directly it reaches a hearer who will not whisper it forward, in that direction at least its progress is arrested. Why do you not adopt this *rôle*, and urge others to do so? Hear if you must the whisper of the slanderer; but let it stop with you, locked in the secret of your own breast. You may be voted rather uninteresting and stupid by a certain society which thrives in whispered calumnies; but you will save many a heart from being torn and lacerated by unkindness and falsehood.

How graphic that word "whisperer" is! People always tell you to be sure not to tell; it is a way they have, though they do not expect you for a moment to keep the story to yourself. It is the kiss under which they betray. Always tell them that you refuse to be an accomplice in evil. If there is a wrong concerning which you must neither take action nor speak, you had better not defile your ears with it.

This is true of the fire of the Holy Ghost. You must feed it by your loving obedience, your study of the Word of God, your faith and prayer. Yield yourself more entirely to His possession. Let your spirit, soul, and body, your every act and desire, be as fuel to the Spirit of God. Pile up the wood of continual sacrifice and self-surrender, till the Divine fire reaches out its hands toward heaven. Even though the wood, like Elijah's, be drenched with water, God's fire will conquer!

The full soul loatheth an honeycomb.

Prov. xxvii. 7.

HONEY was not used in sacrifices made by fire unto the Lord. Its luscious taste may have made it an emblem of the pleasures of the world. As bees roam from flower to flower, sipping nectar here and there, so does the heart of the worldling roam over the world for satisfaction; settling nowhere for long, but extracting sweets from a variety of attractive sources.

The best way of combating worldliness is by satisfying the heart with something better. The full soul loatheth even the honeycomb. When the prodigal gets the fatted calf, he has no further hankering after the husks which the swine eat. The girl who gets real jewels throws away her shams; and the child who has become a man has no taste for childish toys that once seemed all-important. This is the meaning of the old proverb: Love God, and do as you like. Whenever the spirit of worldliness gets into a congregation, you may be sure that the teaching has been defective, and that souls have not been made to sit at the rich banquet of the Divine providing.

We are reminded of the words which the psalmist applied to the Word of God: "Sweeter than honey, or the honeycomb." Fill your heart with God and His sacred truth, and the things of the world will lose their charm. Do you know this absorbing love of Jesus? We can at least choose to know it, and present ourselves to the Holy Spirit, that He may shed it abroad in our hearts. Oh to be full! Full of the more abundant life of which the Lord spoke, of the unspeakable joy, of the peace that passeth understanding—in a word, of Jesus, as the Chief and Best.

He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper.

Prov. xxviii. 13 (R. V.).

THERE must be confession before forgiveness. This is clearly taught everywhere in God's Word. "If thy brother trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times a day turn to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." But he must turn and say, I repent. This is the clear condition. You may and must use every method of inducing him to say this; but he must be brought to say it, before it is right to pronounce the gracious formula of absolution. There may be the disposition to forgive, but there cannot be the declaration of forgiveness, until the wrongdoer perceives the wrong and expresses his regret and sorrow.

The prodigal must say to his father, "I have sinned." It is only as we confess our sins, that our merciful High Priest can forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Confession is to take God's side against sin. It is the lifting out of one thing after another from heart and life, and holding them for a moment before God, with the acknowledgment that it is our fault, our grievous fault.

There is only one way in which transgressions can be covered: that of which the psalmist speaks, when he says, Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is *covered*, because hidden under the propitiation of the blood. In Hood's poem, Eugene Aram sought to cover his sin under the leaves of the forest, and beneath the waters of the river. But in vain. So sinners try to cover their sins in vain. But God hath set forth Christ Jesus to be a propitiation—a word which denotes the mercy-seat—the lid that covered the stone slabs on which the finger of God had written the Law.

WHAT a difference it makes to our teaching and preaching where there is no vision! The people perish for want of seers of those who can say with the apostle, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you also, that ye may have fellowship with us." It is not difficult to know whether a poet or painter has a vision. If he have, there is glow and passion in his work. And it is not more difficult to detect in the accent of the speaker on divine things, whether he is speaking at second-hand, or as the result of direct vision.

This vision of God was vouchsafed to Moses and Elijah and the apostle Paul. Concerning the latter God said, "He shall be a minister and a witness of things which he has seen." This is our only qualification for teaching others; not intellect, nor imagination, nor rhetoric, but to have seen the King and beheld the pattern on the mount. For such a vision, on our part, there must be humility, patience, and faith, a definite withdrawal from the life of sense, and a definite fixedness of gaze on the things that are unseen and eternal. But on God's part there must be revelation. "It pleased God," said the Apostle, "to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him."

The apostle said, "I could not see for the glory of that light." A party of tourists was divided one dull morning in Switzerland; the majority thought that it was useless to attempt the mountains. A few started, soon got beyond the low-hanging clouds, spent a day in the heights under marvellous skies, and returned at night, radiant, and overflowing with what they had seen. Ah, speaking is easy when one has *seen!*

Feed me with the food that is needful for me.

Prov. xxx. 8 (R. V.).

GOD knows what you need for the maintenance of physical life and strength. The body is more than meat, and to have given you this is a pledge that He will give you that. The body is the vehicle and organ of the soul; and since God has given such a wonderful instrument into your custody, He is bound as need arises to furnish needful supplies. He could not expect that you should do what He has arranged should be done in your life, without providing for the repair and maintenance of the wonderful machine through which alone your life-plan can be realized. Trust in His faithfulness. He cannot deny Himself.

But there is other food which is needful. The daily bread of love, of hope, of holy thought, and fellowship. There is other hunger than that of the body. But this also will be provided, according as each day requires. If the human fails, the Divine will take its place, and God Himself will become the complement of your need. The Chinese Christians often put on the gravestones of their cemeteries the words, "They shall hunger no more," in allusion to the idea of the Confucians that children must constantly be sending on supplies to maintain their ancestors. And may we not say, with unwavering certainty, of those who have learned to be satisfied with God, "They shall hunger no more"?

Notice the alternative rendering of the R. V., "The bread of my portion." In God's granaries there is our share of corn already calculated for and provided. Let us ask for and claim it. We have no wish to have more than our share, or to despoil others. As Jesus said, Give us each day the day's supply. O happy child of the great Father, His hired servants have enough and to spare; there is plenty for thee!

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.

Prov. xxxi. 11.

THIS alphabetical poem to godly womanhood is one of the gems of Old Testament Scriptures. It should be read from the R. V., that its significant and beautiful touches may be appreciated. Clearly the Hebrew woman was held in high honor, and had as much freedom of action as she enjoys in Christian countries. Herein the contrast was very marked, as against the women of other Oriental nations. But in the whole delineation there is hardly any trait more beautiful than this—absolute trustworthiness. You can see the pair together: The husband comes in from sitting among the elders, his heart weighted with affairs of state, and he seeks her confidence and advice. He has no fear of her betraying his secrets. He can safely trust her.

This surely is the most sacred joy a woman can have. To be consulted, to be trusted, to share the common toils and responsibilities. Who would not work willingly with her hands, and rise while yet night, and engage in ceaseless toils, if only she had the inspiration that trust brings!

“If then your future life should need
A strength my love can only gain
Through suffering—or my heart be freed
Only by sorrow from some stain,
Then you shall give, and I will take
This crown of fire for Love’s dear sake.”

Can Christ, in like manner, safely trust us? (John ii. 24, R. V.). Can He trust us with His secrets, His interests, His money? Abraham was one whom God could safely trust, and He did trust him as His friend: “Shall I hide from Abraham, . . . for I have known him?” It is required of us also that we be absolutely trustworthy. It is something to have faith; yes, but we must also be faithful.

All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full.
Eccl. i. 7 (R. V.).

THE complaint of this chapter is the tiresome monotony of existence. Always the same tedious routine! The jaded soul of the worldling, who has put God out of his life, sees nothing fresh or interesting anywhere, and yawns with weariness. King Solomon had everything that the world could give to make his years rich, glad, and useful. But his heart turned away from God to things, from the only true God to idols, from the spiritual to the sensual, from heaven to earth; and he became a jaded voluptuary, who records his experiences on these pages, to warn coming generations. His words remind us of Byron's lament at his life being in the sere and yellow leaf; of the closing sentence of "Vanity Fair"; and of entries in the journals of the world's greatest wits and courtiers.

All the rivers of earthly joy may be flowing into your heart, but they will never fill it. They may recede, or dry up, or ebb; but if not, still they will never satisfy. The pleasures of this world after a while become monotonous, and pall on our taste. The appetite grows with its food. But in Christ there is perennial interest. The water that He gives rises up to eternal life. In His love and service there is always satisfaction and blessedness. We need not go outside of Him for new delights; and to know Him is to possess a secret which makes all things new.

I know of a gentleman, who has everything that wealth can give, but who is kept in a perpetual state of irritation, because he cannot eradicate the daisies from his lawn. There's a freckle on every flower, a stain on every leaf, a drawback in every lot, that we may be driven to find perfect fruition in God only.

All his days are but sorrows, and his travail is grief.

Eccl. ii. 23 (R. V.).

WHAT a glimpse this is into a heart that has put God out ! Solomon's power turned away his heart, so that he was not perfect with God, as David, his father. He drifted from God ; and plunged into pleasure and laughter ; into building and planting ; into the pursuit of science and learning. " Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. And, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind " (R. V.). Nothing can satisfy us but God. We were made for Him ; and the heart, as Augustine says, must be forever restless till it finds rest in Him. Thus the shell, brought home from the seashore and placed on the shelf, sighs each time you place it to your ear for the ocean whence it came.

We have no need to envy those who prosper in this world, but are without God, and without hope. Their days are sorrows, and their travail is grief, and at night their hearts take no rest. But if we are to avoid their inward anguish, we must avoid their fatal mistake, and learn to take God into our lives. The river of life, which is the Holy Spirit, flows at our feet ; but we must stoop to take it freely.

Dr. Gordon records the story of a traveller in Barbary, who saw a beautiful clear spring of water, over which was inscribed the legend, "*Drink, and be gone.*" Robbers infested the region, and were constantly on the track of the traveller, ready to waylay and rob him. Therefore he must snatch the cooling draught and hasten on. Shall we refuse ourselves all pleasure in this world ? Shall we write *Touch not* on every innocent gratification ? No ; but as soon as we have tasted of the pleasant draught, and lingered long enough to refresh our jaded souls, to hasten to life's serious tasks.

He has set eternity in their heart.

Eccl. iii. 11 (R. V., marg.).

THE Preacher has been enumerating the various extremes and alternatives of existence, and the natural conclusion might seem to be that since each neutralizes the other, it might be as well for a man to do nothing at all. But a deeper thought is suggested. Man is greater than the changes around him; he has eternity in his heart, and therefore all the varied circumstances of human life resemble the wheels of some great machine, the cogs of which turn in different directions, but the effect is a forward motion, and the manufacture of a fabric that will outlive the machinery that made it. We are greater than circumstance, or change, or things. We have the capacity for the Eternal and Infinite. As the sea-shell sighs for the ocean, so our hearts cry out, though sometimes inarticulately, for God, for the living God. Christ said that foxes have holes and the birds their nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head; and this is true in another sense. The noblest men are those least able to rest anywhere short of God.

God made man in His own image; and nothing more surely attests the greatness of our origin than those faculties of the soul which are capable of yearning for, conceiving, and enjoying the Infinite, the Immortal, and the Divine. And every appetite in nature and grace has its appropriate satisfaction.

Let us come to Him who has the words of eternal life, who is Himself the Bread that endureth unto eternal life. He that cometh to Him shall never hunger; he that believeth in Him shall never thirst.

“Here would we end our quest;
Alone are found in Thee
The life of perfect bliss—the rest
Of immortality.”

Behold, the tears of such as were oppressed.

Eccl. iv. 1.

“DO ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years ?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
But that cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows ;
The young birds are chirping in the nest ;
The young fawns are playing with the shadows ;
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly !
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.”

IT is a sad, sad world, and perhaps must get sadder yet. It may be that we have not yet reached the darkest hour. Oh the tears of the oppressed ; the tiny children ; the terror-stricken fugitives from the Turk, the European trader, and the drunken tyrant of the home ! Through all the centuries tears have flowed, enough to float a navy.

There need be no difficulty in accounting for them. Our race has elected the service of sin and self. Turning our back on God, for whom we were made, we have turned every one to our own way, and are inheriting the ancient curse of travail, tears, thorns, and death. It is quite true that many suffer innocently and vicariously, because we are members one of another ; and by the mysterious arrangement of the Almighty the whole race is bound together by mysterious but indissoluble cords. In Adam all die, all suffer, all sorrow and weep, just as in Christ shall all be made alive. The pain must last, till the Stronger than the strong comes to divide the spoils, and set the captives free.

How comforting it is to realize that God knows our sorrows, puts our tears into His bottle, is afflicted in all our affliction, and bears us on His heart.

To draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools.
Eccl. v. 1 (R. V.).

THIS is certainly half of our business, when we kneel to pray. It is a drawing nigh to hear. One has truly said that the closet is not so much an *oratory*, in the narrow sense of making requests, as an *observatory*, from which we get new views of God, and new revelations of Him.

We are all inclined to be rash with our mouth. We rush into the presence of God, leave our card as on a morning call, and then plunge into the eager rush of our life. We have spoken to Him, but not stayed to hear what He would say in reply. We have suggested many things to Him, but have not sought for His comments, or suggestions, in return. We do not take time to fix the heart's gaze on the unseen and eternal, or to abstract our mind from the voices of the world, so as to hear the still small voice that speaks in silence and solitude.

“Only the waters which in perfect stillness lie
Give back an undistorted image of the sky.”

Keep thy foot; take off the shoes from thy feet, when entering the Presence-chamber, whether alone or with others. Walk warily and reverently; behold! He is near, before whom angels veil their faces with their wings. Come into His presence with holy fear. Let there be no irreverence in demeanor. One writes of the late Mr. Gladstone, “The House of God seemed to be to him at all times just what its name implied; and it is impossible to think of him at any service missing a response, or forgetting an ‘Amen.’ Devotion, earnestness, and concentrated attention were the regular attributes of his nature when engaged in worship. He realized in the simplest fashion that worship was communing with God.”

THE Preacher constantly refers to what is done under the sun; and is not this the clue to so much that is puzzling in this book? If your horizon is limited to what the sun shines on, it is impossible to get the true standpoint of vision, or discover the real policy of life. If this world and the time-day are all, we are entangled in an inexplicable maze. It is impossible to believe in the existence of a benign and wise Creator unless there is more than we can see, larger than we can grasp. We have no choice but blank materialism, unless we believe there is Some one and Something over and above the sun, and that the sun and his attendant train of worlds is but a speck in the vastness of his existence.

O Christian soul, let you and me get beyond the sun, which one day will be no more, to the Lord, who is an everlasting light. Let us sit with Him in the heavenlies, and thence look down upon man and his little life. What inconsiderable atoms do kings and empires appear; even our affliction seems to be but light, and for a moment! Not on this side of the sun, but on that lies our true portion and home, our enduring substance.

In order to live as we should, the sun must be under our feet, a position which is only possible to those who are in Christ Jesus. "I knew a man in Christ," says the Apostle, "caught up into the third heaven, and he heard unspeakable things." Would you be unworldly, seek to become other-worldly. Do you want the sun to grow dim?—ask for the light which is above the brightness of the sun.

Set your affections on those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made glad.

Eccl. vii. 3 (R. V.).

WHO does not know that our most sorrowful days have been amongst our best? When the face is wreathed with smiles, and we trip lightly over meadows bespangled with spring flowers, our heart is often running to waste. The soul which is always blithe and gay misses the deepest life. It has its reward, and it is satisfied to its measure, though that measure is a very scanty one. But the heart is dwarfed, and the nature, which is capable of the highest heights, the deepest depths, is undeveloped; and life presently burns down to its socket without having known the resonance of the deepest chords of joy. "Blessed are they that mourn."

Stars shine brightest in the long dark nights of winter. The gentians show their fairest bloom amidst almost inaccessible heights of snow and ice. God's promises seem to wait for the pressure of pain to trample out their richest juice as in a wine-press. Sorrow brings us nearest to the Man of Sorrows, and is the surest passport to His loving sympathy. Only those who have sorrowed know how tender His comfort can be. It is only as the door shuts upon the joys of the earth that the window is opened to the blessedness of the unseen and eternal. Let sadness cover your face, Jesus will enter the heart, and make it glad, for the days in which you have been afflicted, and the years in which you have seen evil.

Is your face sad? Are you passing through bitter and trying experiences? Be of good cheer. Out of the sorrows that make the face sad will come ultimate joy. This affliction is working out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And the day is not distant when God will wipe tears from off all faces.

The King's word hath power.

Eccl. viii. 4 (R. V.).

WHEN our King speaks it is done. He spoke in creation, and power went with His word to call all things out of nothing. He spoke in His earthly ministry, and power accompanied every word, in giving eyes to the blind and life to the dead. He spoke, and the paralyzed had power to walk. He spoke, and the winds dropped, whilst the tumultuous waves were hushed to rest. He spoke, and men knew their sins forgiven, to be remembered against them no more forever. He spoke, and the dying thief passed into Paradise.

Whatever He bids you do by His word, be sure that He will enable you to do it by His power. He works in us to will and to work of His good pleasure; that is, He never directs us in any path of obedience or service without furnishing a sufficient supply of grace. Does He bid you renounce some evil habit? The power to renounce it awaits you. Claim it. Does He bid you walk on the water? The power by which to walk only waits for you to claim it. Does He bid you perform irksome duty? There is such transforming power issuing from Him as to make duty a delight, if only you will avail yourself of it. Whenever you are called to stand up to speak the word of your King, be sure to seek and obtain the power—*that* shall prove your best credential. Take the power of the King with you: it is His signet-ring, by which men will be convinced that you have been entrusted with His word.

“Sustain me, that with Thee I walk these waves
Resisting!—Breathe me upward, Thou in me
Aspiring, Who art the Way, the Truth, the Life—
That no Truth henceforth seem indifferent,
No Way to Truth laborious, and no Life,
Not even this life I live, intolerable!”

The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

Eccl. ix. 11.

THIS is true in another sense than the Preacher meant. His conclusion was that time and chance happen to all alike in the race and battle of life. To us it means that God comes to those who are not swift, but, like Mephibosheth, lame on both feet, and gives them the prize which they could not win; that He bends over those who are not strong, and gives them the victory which they could not procure. The Gospel is full of promise to younger sons, bruised reeds, lame and helpless souls, to babes and sucklings, to those that have no might; whilst it hides its secrets from the wise and prudent, and withholds its rewards from the swift and strong.

You are not swift. Long ago the spring was taken from your life, and the elasticity from your feet. For many years you have lain by the Beautiful Gate, seeing the happy souls pass to the inner shrine, and coming out entranced. You have been content to live on their alms. But better things are in store. He who knows your case will even now give you perfect soundness. Though you cannot win the prize of your high calling by running, it shall be yours by receiving and taking. It is a gift; and though you have not legs you have surely hands.

You are not strong. But it is well. Many of us are too strong for God. He has to weaken us by touching the sinew of our thigh. When Jacob went from fighting to clinging, he became a prince with God. Isaiah left it on record that God gives power to the faint, and increases might to those who have no power. And the great Apostle of the Gentiles gloried in his infirmities, because he had discovered that when he was weak then he was strong, since the power of Christ was only perfected in weakness.

If one do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength. *Eccl. x. 10.*

IF this is true, as we know it is, may we not often use it as an appeal to God? There are times with all who work for God, when they are blunt, through much usage. The brain is blunt, and cannot think. The heart is blunt, and cannot feel. The voice is blunt, and has lost its ringing note. How often the evangelist, toward the end of a series of services, feels blunt! Sometimes also there are private sorrows, of which we cannot speak, which take off the edge. At all such times let us turn to God and say, "Put in more strength. Let Thy power be magnified in my weakness. Give more grace, so that Thy work shall not suffer." I suppose Paul meant this when he said that he gloried in infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Surely more work is done by a blunt edge and Divine power, than by a sharp edge and little power.

This, however, does not justify us in seeking to be blunt. And when we are conscious that the edge is going off, it becomes us to seek a fresh whetting. The time is not lost in the harvest-field when the reapers whet their scythes with musical tinkle. A day in the country or a week by the seaside are very pleasant whetstones. Solomon says that friendship, the face of a friend, will sharpen a blunt edge; and full often we have been sharpened and quickened by seasons of holy fellowship. But after all, nothing gives us such a keen edge as the devotional perusal of the Divine Word. Let us appropriate the words of the prophet, and each one ask to be made a new *sharp* threshing-instrument having teeth, that we may thresh the mountains, and make them small, and give our God as little anxiety as possible.

In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand. *Eccl. xi. 6.*

WE are all tempted to look too much to the winds and clouds. We study the faces of people, their moods and circumstances, and say, "It is not a favorable time to approach them about their souls. He does not look to be a likely case, or in a likely mood." But how do we know? If we are always waiting for favoring conditions, we shall resemble the farmer who is ever looking out for perfect weather, and lets the whole autumn pass without one handful of grain reaching the furrows; or who is always studying the clouds, seeking for a spell of hot summer weather; and presently the chance is gone, and the crop lost.

In fact, we can never tell what God is doing in the secrets of the heart. He may have been prosecuting His deep and wise designs with the souls that appear most untoward and unprepossessing. He may have led them to such a point that they are most eagerly yearning for the hand to lead them into the light. The eunuch in his chariot, might not, from a distance, have seemed specially ripe for the Christian evangelist; but, on coming near, he was discovered to be an enquirer. Saul of Tarsus was the least likely man in all Palestine to be a Christian; but God had been at work with him. Let us dare then to trust God, not looking for winds or sunshine, but scattering everywhere the precious seed of the Gospel.

" Say not, the struggle naught availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain;
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been things remain.

" For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main."

The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words.

Eccl. xii. 10.

THE wise preacher or teacher is not content with merely teaching the people knowledge, he will ponder and seek out and set in order the lessons of Divine wisdom; and when these are settled, he will go on to find out acceptable words. We must be careful to secure the "apples of gold," and no less careful to place them in the "pictures of silver." Not that we are to make beauty of language an object in itself; but having conceived high and holy thoughts we should give them a worthy expression, so that the Royal word may ride forth in a becoming equipage. It is unfit that the vessels of the sanctuary should be carried only in badger skins; their first covering at least must be "all of blue." If we are stewards in God's household to give his children food, let us serve it up suitably. The linen should be clean, and the table garnished.

Remember, however, that the words of the wise are as goads and nails. They must have points, sometimes to prick to duty, at other times to stick fast in the memory. In every sermon or lesson there should be *points*. To arrest and compel attention is more important than to please the ear. Do not refine and beautify it to such an extent, that there may be nothing left to stir the conscience and lacerate the heart.

Words that best fit the enunciation of God's truth are given from the One Shepherd. We are enriched by Him, not only in all knowledge but in all utterance. He who made the mouth can put His words into the mouth. Ask Him to speak to you, that you may speak in accents borrowed from His tone; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.

The King hath brought me into His chambers.

Cant. i. 4.

WE cannot force an entrance into the inner chambers of the love of God. They remind one of the apartments which are reserved for the personal use of the sovereign, and are private from the foot of strangers. All the world is welcome to the State apartments; but only the favored few to the inner sanctuary. So it is with the love of God. It is open to all the world; but its secret is hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes.

It is pleasant to think of the chambers of the King opening one from the other in a long and glorious succession, and to imagine each inscribed with its text and adorned with characteristic emblems. The Chamber of Regeneration leading to Assurance; and this to Consecration; and this to the Enduement of the Holy Spirit; and this to the Quiet Heart; and this to a Life of Victory; and this to Abiding Fellowship. Each is a distinct phase of the Christian life; and from one to another the King leads the obedient and loving disciple. At each advance the chambers become more magnificent and delightful, until the last one opens out upon a terrace which looks across the brief space to the City of God.

Will you let the King do this? Then you must begin by enthroning Him in your heart and obeying Him in your life. You must keep His words, that He may manifest Himself unto you, as He does not unto the world. Then indeed we shall be glad, and rejoice, and make mention of His love. What if the beauty of our surroundings makes us cry out that we are black as the tents of Kedar! He knew it all before, and will not love us less; nay, He will array us in His own comeliness.

The voice of my Beloved.

Cant. ii. 8.

THERE are times when winter rules within, and the atmosphere is full of rain, and the birds are mute. It does not necessarily argue that we have backslidden; only that the rich, emotional life has for a little died down, as the sap sinks to the earth during the winter's pause.

The first symptom of returning joy is the voice of the Beloved Master. We do not seek Him, but He us. We do not call, but He calls. The voice of spring is heard sounding through our soul. The sweet, clear, tender notes of the Saviour ring melodiously around us, and as we hear them we know that our winter is past, the rain is over and gone, and the flowers and birds are at hand.

Rise up, my love! Rise up from lethargy and sloth; from the low levels on which you have lived; from the earth with its attractions, and the grave with its fetters. And as the command issues from His lips, He gives rising grace. Come away, He cries. There is richer life and wider upon the mountains. Let us climb the heights that beckon us. The voice of Christ is constantly summoning us to fuller experiences, to leave what is behind and below, to press up and on, so that we may know Him and the power of His resurrection.

How appropriate these words are as we may conceive of them being spoken to the expectant Church! After centuries of waiting she shall hear the archangel's trump, and it will be the call of her Beloved to rise up and come away. Then her winter will be past forever; the unwithering flowers will appear; the time of singing will have come; and the voice of the turtle-dove, significant of affection, will be heard throughout Emmanuel's Land.

I sought Him, but I found Him not.

Cant. iii. 1.

GOD lets us seek, hiding Himself to draw us after Him. How much our race owes to His hidings! He has hidden pearls in the ocean, jewels in the rocks, coal in the earth, fish in the deep. By all these methods He has drawn men forth from lethargy and inaction, to strenuous and vigorous lives; so that the gains of their toil have consisted not only in the treasures they have obtained, but in the developed faculties which have come to them in the course of their search.

Is it not so in the spiritual life? Our Lord withdraws Himself, not in anger or disappointment, but that we may be sensible of not having attained, of not being already perfect, and that we may follow on to know the Lord, and to apprehend something more of that for which we were apprehended. Do not be disappointed, O Christian soul, if some time you should cease to feel the familiar delight in certain hymns, services, books, or teachers. Thy Master has withdrawn Himself from these; but thou wilt find Him further on. Never rest till you have discovered Him in some deeper revelation. The watchmen that go about the city, and who are probably messengers of Divine truths, may not help you in your quest; but the Holy Spirit waits to lead you into all truth. Open your heart to Him. It is but a little time, and as you pass from all human teachers you will find Him whom you love, or perhaps be found of Him. Then hold Him, or better, be held by Him. It is a sweet motto, "*Teneo et teneor*"—"I hold, and am held."

"And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright."

*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;
blow upon my garden.* *Cant. iv. 16.*

THE garden of the heart is like one of those old-fashioned gardens, surrounded by high brick walls, prepared for fruit-trees. I have one in my eye as I write, on the south wall of which old apple-trees have bloomed and fruited for generations. The garden is filled with all manner of spices, "spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, and with all trees of frankincense." Sometimes, however, the spices hang heavily upon the air. They are present, but hardly discernible to the quickest sense. Then the wind is needed to blow through the garden path, that the spices may flow out and pass beyond the barriers to the passers-by.

How often it has happened in the history of the children of God, that those who have known them have never realized the intrinsic excellence and loveliness of their characters until the north wind of sorrow and pain has broken with blustering force upon them. Then suddenly spices of rarest odor have exhaled and been carried afar. How the delicate trees dread the north wind! What a tremor goes through the crowded garden walks when they hear the husbandman calling to the north wind to awake! We all choose the south wind. But remember that the Euroclydon that swept down the ravines of Crete upon the Alexandrian corn-ship brought out spices which had slumbered unknown in the heart of the great apostle. His courage! His patience! His power of inspiring hope amid despair, and breaking bread with thanksgiving! Ah, north wind, thy ministry has been of incalculable worth to all of us. We shiver before thy searching power, but the spices will repay. A vane in Leicestershire is inscribed with GOD IS LOVE. He is so, from whatever quarter the wind blows.

*What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
that thou dost so adjure us? Cant. v. 9 (R. V.).*

THE daughters of Jerusalem, each of whom had her beloved, could not understand the urgency of this maiden who had lost her beloved. Her anguish at her loss was so extreme, her heart-sickness was so agonizing, her frenzy so bewildering, that they were startled into feeling that he of whom she was bereft was no common lover. There had been times when each of them had been temporarily forlorn; but they knew that they had never suffered like this! The greatness of her pain was the mirror in which they caught a glimpse of the ineffable beauty of the Bridegroom.

Speak of Christ, so that men and women around may be constrained to cry, "Your Beloved excels our beloveds. We cannot speak of them as thou dost of Him. To gain them does not fill us with the same ecstasy, or to lose them with the same woe."

What are the beloveds that men seek after? There is the beloved of worldly success, of human adulation and applause, of art, science, and war. They intoxicate their admirers, but fail to satisfy. Who can say of them that they are chief, and outshine the gold of Ophir, beryl, sapphires, ivory, and cedar, the rarest products of earth, as synonyms for priceless worth? But all these gathered together are poor and unworthy emblems of the peerless beauty of Emmanuel. White in purity, ruddy with the bloodstain, His bushy locks emblematical of immortal youth, His eyes like water-brooks reflecting the deep azure of the sky and telling of eternal love. Ransack earth for metaphors, and they fall short of the truth. Words fail to express His beauty, His grace, His loveliness: let us try to reflect His glory.

I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.

Cant. vi. 3.

TO get the full significance of this precious sentence we should compare it with chap. ii. 16. Remark their parallelism, and their contrast.

“My Beloved is mine, and I am His.
He feedeth His flock among the lilies” (R. v.).

And this —

“I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.
He feedeth His flock among the lilies” (R. v.).

In the first of these couplets the Spouse lays the first emphasis on her hold of the Beloved; only secondarily does she congratulate herself that she is his. But in the second couplet her chief thought is that she belongs to him.

In the earlier stages of Christian life, we think most of what we have in Christ; afterward we love to dwell on His possession of us. You are His estate, for Him to cultivate and rear successive crops for His praise and glory. You are His jewel, to obtain which He renounced all, and on which He will expend infinite care, cutting your facets, and polishing you to shine brightly in His light. You are His house in which He can dwell, opening out unexpected apartments and passages. You are a member of His body, through which He will fulfill His holy purpose. You are His bride, to win whom He came from afar. You are owned, possessed, inhabited, loved, with a peculiar personal affection. As Keble says: “Thou art thy Saviour's darling; doubt no more.”

“As the bridegroom to his chosen,
As the king unto his realm,
As the keep unto the castle,
As the pilot to the helm,
So, Lord, art Thou to me.”

I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me.

Cant. vii. 10.

THIS is the thankful recognition of the Bride. She knows that she belongs to, that she is loved by, the Bridegroom—that His desire is turned toward her with ineffable longing.

Dear soul, do you realize the desire of your Beloved toward you? You love Him; but He loves you ever so much more. You desire Him; but His desire toward you is as much greater than yours toward Him, as sunlight is more brilliant than moonlight. Know ye not, says James, that the Spirit which He has caused to dwell in us longeth even to envy? Jesus desires all our love, all our energy, all our possessions, that we should be only, always, all for Him. How have we responded to His great desire? Alas, our response has been very uncertain and unsatisfactory. Sometimes we have felt a pure flame of answering affection; but it has soon been obscured with clouds of smoke, or has died down for want of oil.

The Lord desires more of our time, that we should withdraw ourselves from the busy rush of the world and the absorbing interests of life, in order to allow Him to commune with us. He desires more of our affection, that He may teach us how to respond to His love. He desires to teach us how to share His riches, as His joint-heirs; how to sit with Him in heavenly places; how to work in the energy of His Spirit. Let us yield ourselves to His desires, and allow Him to effect in us and for us all He desires for us, so that he may give Him delight. "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." If, as Zephaniah says, He is silent in His love, because His love is too strong for speech, we may yield ourselves to it without misgiving.

*Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,
leaning upon her Beloved?* *Cant. viii. 5.*

STANDING on the mountainous plateau with which Judea passes into the desert, the daughters of Jerusalem behold the Spouse, coming slowly up from the wilderness, leaning hard upon her Beloved; and in this we have an emblem of the Church, and of each faithful soul. The wilderness can well be taken as an emblem of the experience of believers, who are suffered to hunger and thirst, exposed to be smitten by the sun of temptation, and pacing wearily over the lowlands of a somewhat arduous and monotonous existence.

But the wilderness-life is not destined to be our perpetual experience. We are bidden to come up from it. Life is meant to be an unceasing ascent from strength to strength until we stand in Zion before God. Is your path trying and perilous? Does it seem as though you will never gain the heights that rear themselves before your gaze? Do you feel prepared, like Hagar, to yield to despair and death? See, there is One that goes beside. Turn to regard Him. His hands are as though they had been pierced. He is your Beloved; lean on Him. He gives you His arm to rest upon, and He will sustain you when heart and flesh fail. The wilderness will bring out a tenderness, an all-sufficiency, a readiness of resource, on His part, which you would never have guessed unless your exigencies had become imperative. Be sure of this, lean hard, and believe that

“He will bring thee where the fountains
Fresh and full spring forth above,
Still throughout the endless ages
Serving Him with perfect love.”

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